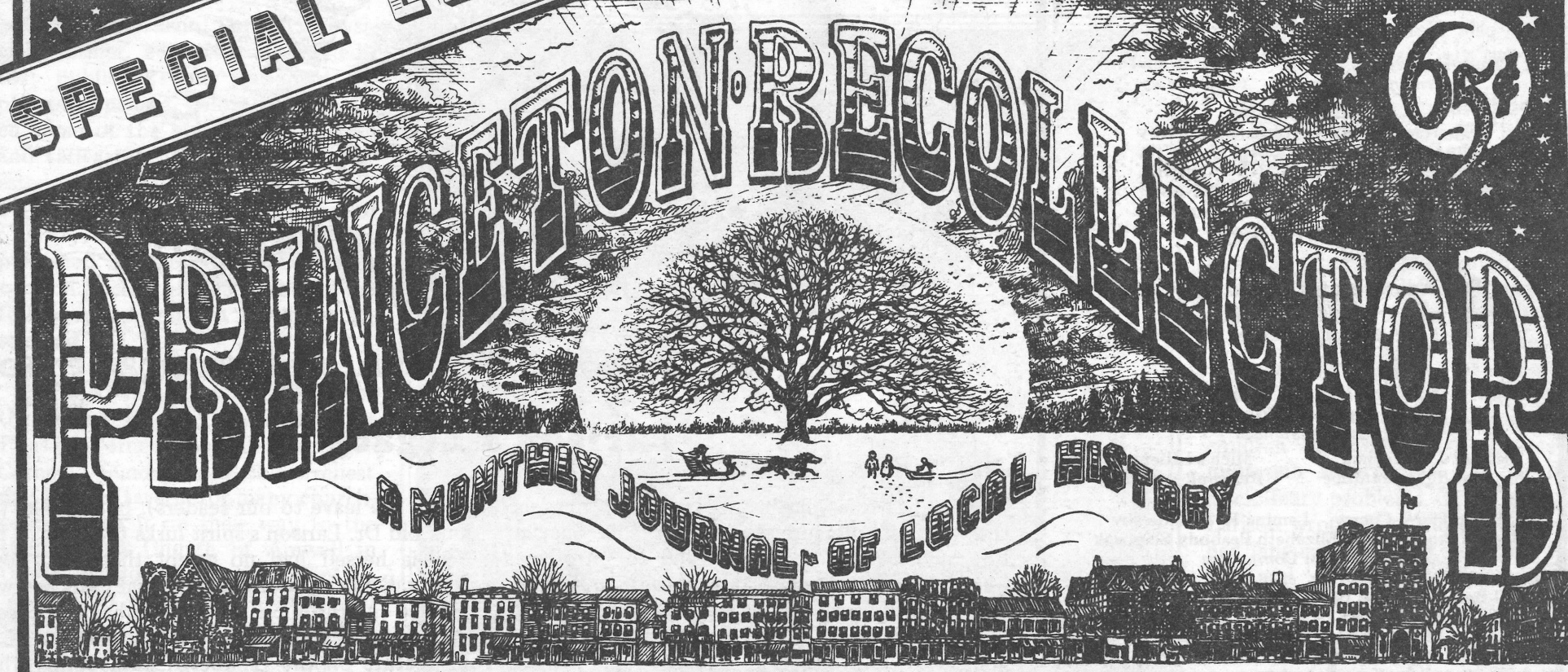


SPECIAL EDITION



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Winter 1980

Silvia Dubois, Slave of the Sourlands, Related Life Story to Larison

The twenty-seventh of January dawned frosty and dreary. The mercury pointed to 20° above zero. The sky was overcast and soon the weather appeared threatening. Hills and dales, mountains and valleys, uplands and leas, were covered with snow; and, save the numerous bold areas of woods and the spreading boughs of leafless orchards, the prospect was quite arctic.

But the sleighing was good and the cares of busy life forced many a cutter from his home to brave the frigid air of the chilly morning. Horses stepped quick, light and free, and the jingle sleigh bells echoed from the four corners of the horizon. But the furry muffs covering the heads and faces of the well-robed passengers told well that no one left his home that morning to sleigh-ride for pleasure.

It was Saturday, and as the duties of the schoolroom did not demand our labors for the day, we turned our attention to the abject and the aged. Accordingly, about seven o'clock that morning we adjusted our wrappings, mounted the sleigh, and directed our way to Cedar Summit, the most elevated portion of the Sourland Mountain. Rapidly we sped along. As we reached the brow of the mountain, for a moment we paused to survey the landscape. Toward the West, North and East, the view was unobstructed, and the prospect was grand.

Soon we reached the crest of Cedar Summit. The scenery here was especially delightful. The cedars covered with snow seemed things of art; while the huge round rocks, with snowy backs, looked like the pictures of houses in Arctic scenes. Through the winding way we wended our course, amid a forest mostly of cedar, until, at once, a mountain vista came to view, and we looked eastward, far out over a delightful plain that stretches away until it is bounded by the sea.

Onward we hastened, over a road that meandered, now amid an umbrageous forest, now amid rocky areas overgrown with cedars, now amid the small rocky fields of the mountain farmer. The mountain-

eers' huts, far removed from the road, away back near some spring, or upon the brink of some splashing rill, exhibited no signs of life, save the sooty columns of curling smoke that lazily ascended through the forest boughs.

From the main road to each mountaineer's hut, or to sparse groups of squalid settlements, footpaths or narrow byways extended back, sometimes for miles, meandering amid huge rocks, thickets of cedars, and shadowy forests, through marshes and swamps, and over streams that are not everywhere forded. These byways are best known to the mountaineers. Accordingly, when we had arrived at the corner at which the road extends

eastward to Rocky Mills, we employed one who professed to be acquainted with these winding paths to lead our way to the hut of Silvia Dubois.

To me, the site at which we left the main road to go to Silvia's looked no more like a road than did any other half rod of ground upon the same side of the road. But faith in our guide induced us to follow him wherever he led. The way was very crooked. It seemed that not so much as a single rod of the path extended in the same direction. Nor could we see far ahead of us, sometimes not even a rod. On we moved, around huge rocks, between large trees, over stones, through narrow and dangerous passways, now amid a thicket of

cedars, or a growth of brambles, or a copse of bushes, or a spare forest of hickories.

By and by a vista appeared. We were on a slight eminence. Opening up before us was an area of land cleared of trees, bushes and brambles, fenced and farmed.

It is the property of Elizabeth, the youngest daughter of Silvia Dubois. Upon it, her modest mansion rises, a hut ten feet square, built on legs, roofed with boards, unadorned with porch, piazza, colonnade, or veranda. Primitive simplicity enters into every facet of its architecture. It contains not an element that is not absolutely needed. Nearby stand the scraggling branches of a dead apple tree, and beneath it is shelter for the faithful dog. Around the area is a fence, built in the most economic way. Peering above the snow here and there were stacks of maize, cabbage, bean vines, pea-brush, and other evidences that the enclosed area, during the Spring, Summer, and Autumnal months, had been tilled and had yielded a small harvest to the tenants of the soil.

We descended to the fence that enclosed the lot, fastened, and blanketed our horses and advanced toward the habitation. The door is double — consisting of an upper and a nether part. The upper part stood ajar, and in the center of the opening appeared the full, round face of a large, buxom Negress, the owner and proprietor of the home which we visited, and the youngest daughter of Silvia Dubois, the lady of whom we had heard so much talk. Our visit was a surprise. Yet, with marked complaisance and that hospitality which characterizes the fearless mountaineer, we were invited in, and bade to be seated by the stove.

Cautiously, but critically, I surveyed the room and the furniture. The logs composing the wall were not entirely straight, and the interspaces between them, in some places, were large. At one time, these had been filled with mud, and then, no doubt, the house was comparatively warm. But now, in many places, by frost and rain, and by bug and mouse, the mud had crumbled and

Continued on page eight

SILVIA DUBOIS,

(NOW 116 YERS OLD.)

A BIOGRAFY

—OF—

The Slav who Whipt her Mistres

—AND—

GAND HER FREEDOM.

BY C. W. LARISON, M. D.,

PRINCIPAL OF THE ACADEMY OF SIENO AND ART AT RINGOS, N. J.:
FORMERLY PROF. NATURAL SIENO IN THE UNIVERSITY AT LEWIS-
BURG, PA.; AUTHOR OF ELEMENTS OF ORTHOPEY;
THE TENTING SCHOOL, &c., &c.

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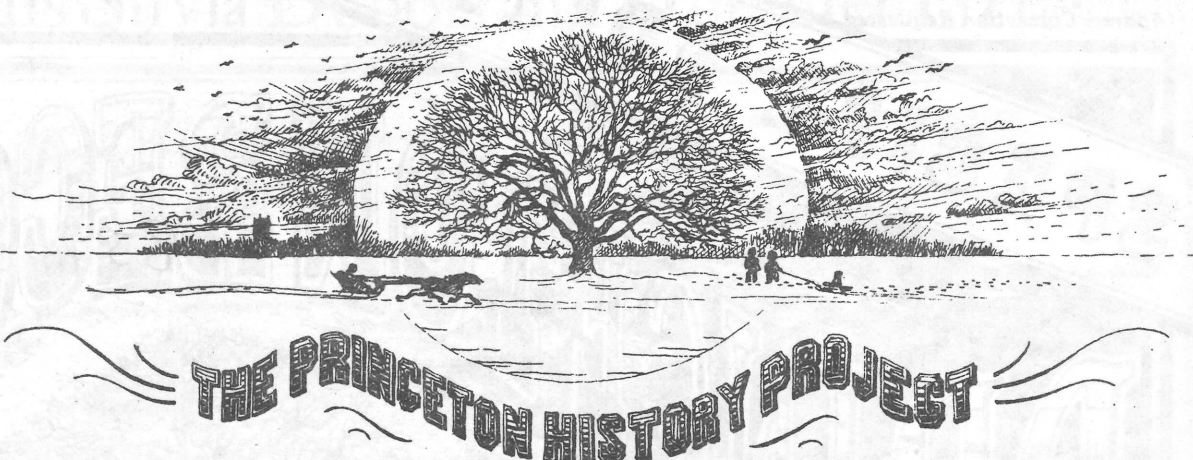
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Larison's Legacy

After nearly a year in preparation, it gives us the greatest pleasure to present this Special Edition of *The Recollector*, and to introduce our readers to two remarkable local figures from the last century of whom we have become very fond: Silvia Dubois and her biographer, Cornelius W. Larison. Like "Aunt Pet," whose reminiscence was shared in these pages a year ago, these two personalities, once encountered, are not likely to be soon forgotten.

Our own acquaintance began almost two years ago at a TOWNSPEOPLE gathering when Helen G. Legler, a former Hunterdon denizen, then living at Rossmoor in Jamesburg, handed us a slender volume which turned out to be *The Biography of Silvia Dubois*. Even at first glance it was intriguing, as it seemed to be printed in code. In fact, the curious words and symbols exemplified Larison's unique attempts at a simplified and phonetic spelling of the English language. Later, as we read the recollections he had drawn from the hundred and sixteen year old Sourland native, we realized how perfectly suited was Larison's orthography in presenting Silvia's dialectical idiosyncrasies of speech. Astonishingly, what the little book actually contained was an extraordinarily true "oral history" of a local woman born in the decade before the Revolution!

The particular circumstances by which we initially acquired Silvia's story proved to be the first of many coincidental occurrences which left us in the shadow of Larison's legacy. The very copy that Mrs. Legler offered us had been given her by her friend, Mary Blackwell, who, as a child, had accompanied her father, Dr. Larison, on his initial visit to Silvia, where the old slave's story was first revealed. Already we felt ourselves part of an unbroken chain.

When we sought to augment the few original illustrations from Larison's book for this new presentation of Silvia's saga, it was our good fortune to turn to Earl Hubbard, whose drawings last graced these pages in our October 1975 feature on turn-of-the-century camp meetings. The splendid results of Mr. Hubbard's efforts give new life to the account, all the more telling for his personal knowledge of the mountain life the old woman described.

Even our efforts to advertise the story as it grew to fill more and more pages were rewarded with further remarkable connections. The brothers Van Doren, whose lumber yard has long been a Hopewell institution, regaled us with stories passed on by their father, born in 1870, who as a youth had known both Silvia and her daughter Elizabeth. Likewise, the Centennial Savings and Loan of Hopewell unexpectedly furnished assistance on the latter-day stories of Sourland lore also contained in this issue. To our astonishment, the officer to whom we described the article readily produced two period postcards from the bank's extensive collection, supplying the very illustrations we lacked.

But perhaps the most curious circumstance came when we approached the friendly proprietors of the Ringoes Inn, whose handsome 1812 structure once housed Dr. Larison's Seminary at Ringoes. "Aha," they exclaimed, "perhaps you can explain our ghost!" The spectre, who has been known to slam doors, disturb table settings, and upset more than a few female employees, could not be fleshed out by our staff

(a task we leave to our readers), but we like to think old Dr. Larison's spirit lurks there yet.

Silvia herself had no doubt that many lost souls stalked the Sourlands. Several years ago we included a chronicle of a number of these apparitions (Vol. II, No 9) in connection with our feature on the Lindbergh kidnapping. The account was first published as a warning to "The Lone Eagle" a few months before his child's abduction added another page to the mountain's violent history. A year ago, solely by chance, we and our tape recorder happened to be present at a reunion of three Sourland natives. Their first-hand observations of the many unexplained occurrences which brand the mountain as such a singularly untamed territory, have been included here to underline the fact that even a hundred years after Silvia's day, the character of the area and its people remains much the same.

One of the most sustained endeavors in the development of this Special Edition has been our search for the photograph of Silvia Dubois, which her biographer commissioned at a Lambertville studio late in 1883. To our lasting dismay, unless one of our readers can supply new evidence to the contrary, this portrait seems to be lost forever. But almost miraculously, a few days before we went to press, a separate likeness of Silvia and her daughter Elizabeth was discovered in the archives of the Hunterdon Historical Society in Flemington. We hope our enlarged reproduction on the back page will afford our readers further insight into the character of this exceptional woman, whose narrative endows us with a unique understanding of the early slave-holding days in our area.



Finally, one fact has eluded us entirely — the date of Silvia Dubois' demise. Hunterdon historian Norman Wittwer supplied it — almost, in the form of a series of clippings here included as a postscript to her memories. But for all we know, Silvia has fulfilled her 1883 wish to "live another hundred years." We hope that this edition will help to perpetuate her memory. Living or dead, we have no doubt that she roams her accustomed Sourland haunts still.

Cornelius Larison, Hunterdon Native, Taught in Rocktown, Copper Hill

Cornelius Wilson Larison: physician, farmer, educator, author, editor, publisher, and exponent of phonetic spelling. Below are recounted some of the highlights of a long and variegated life. For those interested in a more extensive and detailed biography, we recommend *Country Doctor* by Harry B. Weiss, published by the New Jersey Agricultural Society in 1953, whence the following information has been abstracted.

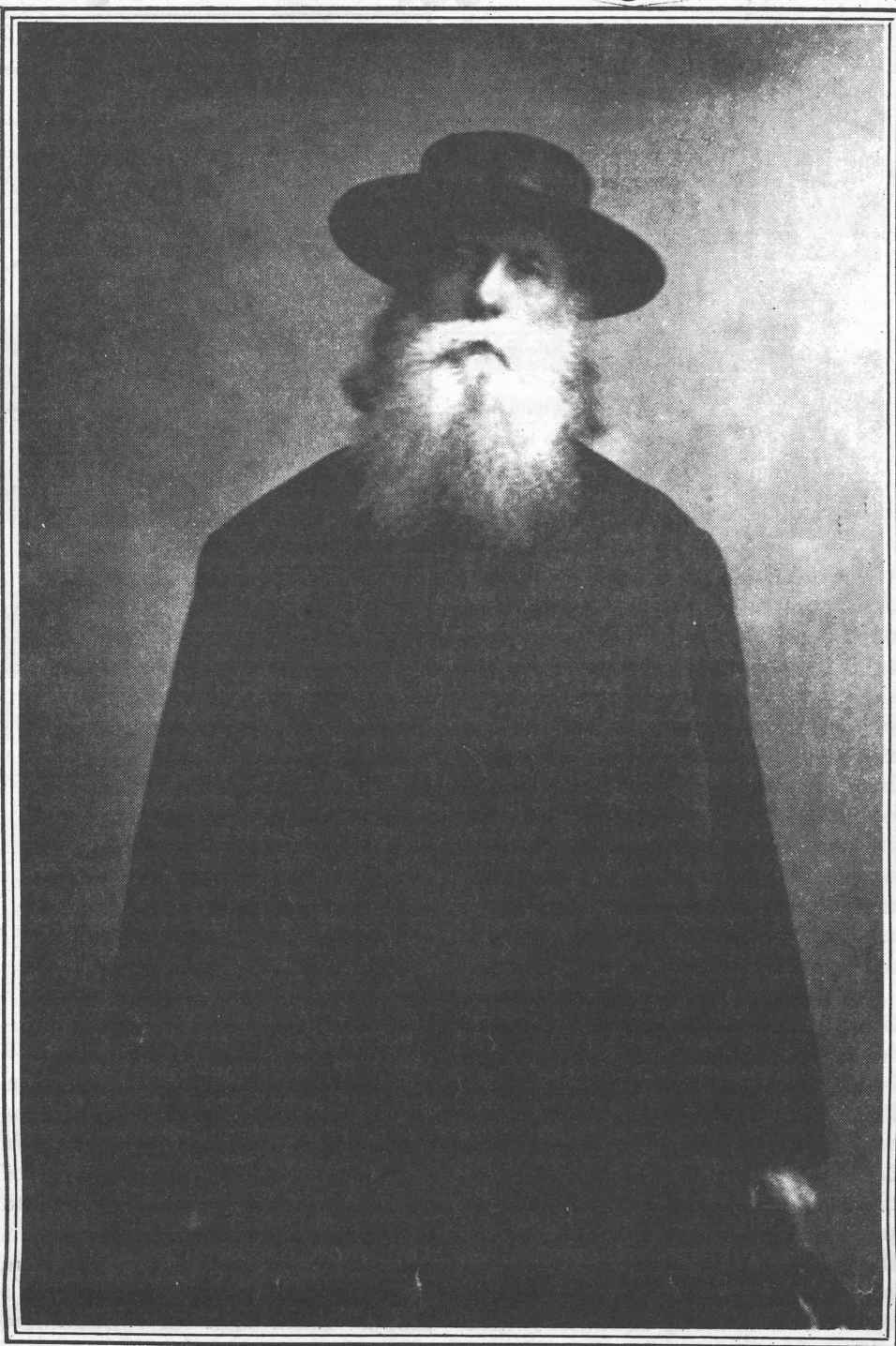
Larison's father was the keeper of the tavern on Old York Road at Pleasant Corner (also called Larison's Corner). Sunday was the liveliest day for the tavern, for many churchgoers visited it on their way to the United First Church of Amwell in Upper Ringoes. At one point, a proposal to move the church excited a great deal of concern on the part of Larisons, who were afraid that it would deprive them of their Sunday trade.

In later years, a local bartender would be known to say, "the ground that divides the Infernal Region from the people above it is thinner at Larison's Corner than at any other place in the whole world." Although born and raised in an area whose people were known for, among other things, foul language, rough behavior, and a penchant for vice, Larison would always call it home, and throughout his life, work toward the moral and intellectual enlightenment of the inhabitants of Ringoes.

Some of the patterns of Cornelius Larison's future were mapped out in a one-room, hexagonal schoolhouse. It seems that trying to pronounce words was quite a tribulation for him, especially words he'd never before encountered and which were not pronounced as one might expect. On numerous occasions, he could be found in the corner, a dunce cap on his head — a sign of his defeat in a private war waged against the illogic of the English language.

Due to the difficulty he had in coming to grips with spelling, he was a slow reader as a boy, but gradually developed a facility for reading and a real hunger for books. By the time he reached adolescence, he was rarely without a book in his hand, regardless of whatever other activity he might be involved in at the moment. From class "dummy," he evolved into a well-read, quick, and able student who was chosen by his peers to teach them whenever the schoolmaster was absent.

He began his study of medicine in 1855 at the Pennsylvania College of Medicine in Philadelphia. Although his brothers' studies were supported by their parents, Cornelius was of a more independent nature, and refused financial assistance from anyone. To pay his way through school and earn enough to cover the living



DR. CORNELIUS W. LARISON

expenses of a very frugal existence, he worked a variety of odd jobs, including: hawking a "Magic Writing Press," assorted medicaments, and pocket grindstones on street corners, selling sweet potatoes wholesale, and performing services for seven professors (which enabled him to attend lectures free of charge).

After an initial period of shock, he was to develop a fascination with dissection. Because of the low price (eleven dollars apiece) of cadavers, dissection was a common activity amongst the students, and Cornelius availed himself of every opportunity to study the human anatomy using these methods. It might be said that his zeal went to extremes, if the objects displayed on the mantelpiece of the room he shared with his brother are any indication: two skulls, the mounted bones of a foot and a hand, a dried human heart with attached large blood vessels,

and a backbone with its ribs.

In the Spring of 1856, he suspended his medical studies in order to fill in some of the gaps in his education by attending Flemington High School, where he took courses in Latin, Greek, and English. Concurrently, he literally sowed the seeds of what would prove a successful nursery business. By selling young peach trees he'd planted, he drew enough income to plant an entire orchard of 6,000 trees, on his

own land (which he'd also bought with these earnings), only two years later.

Before resuming medical school, Larison took several years' leave to continue his outside studies and to teach. His first experience as a teacher came in the Fall of 1856 at Moore's District School, situated on the road from Ringoes to Grover. In Spring of the following year, he convinced the trustees of the Rocktown District School that he, as schoolmaster, could handle the school's drastic cross-section of students — from the snobby well-born children to the rough 'n ready mountain kids — and the ensuing disciplinary problems. Of his charges, Larison wrote that "more roughness, bad language, hooting, howling, yelling, and shouting could hardly be exhibited by the same number of pupils under any circumstances."

From Rocktown, he went to Lewisburg, where he studied at The Academy and also taught a class or two in Latin. His next job was at Copper Hill, where he instructed his students in Latin, French, algebra, mensuration, geometry, and surveying.

His stint at Copper Hill affords some evidence of his sterner side. Although at the time he carried only ninety-six pounds on his five foot ten inch frame, he feared no man and no task. He was a disciplinarian extraordinaire, who had no qualms (when the situation warranted) about flogging a student until the blood came, even if the student happened to be a girl. Such treatment proved to be the only effective way of subduing the more belligerent students.

With the funds accumulated from his peach trees, Larison bought in 1860 a farm near the Sandy Ridge Baptist Church. After only half a year teaching at the Sandy Ridge High School, he gave it up to accept an offer made him by a John S. Higgins, of a half interest in the

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Larison Made House Calls in a Buggy with Daughter in a Starch Box

Flemington High School and an associate principalship. Higgins was anxious to enhance his school's reputation by improving its curriculum, organization, and discipline, and Larison had been recommended to him as the man for the job.

Despite, or perhaps because of, some severe blows dealt to the members of the class he taught, they came to respect him and to enjoy his presence both in and out of school. They participated in many activities outside the classroom — the first field trips — swimming, collecting plants, hiking in the Sourland Mountains.

In 1861, Higgins wished to withdraw, and sold his partner the whole of his interest in Flemington High School. Three terms later, the ailing Larison also had to disburden himself of the school.

January 1863 marked C. W. Larison's matriculation from Geneva Medical College in New York State after two years of study. In the same year, he married Mary Jane Sergeant, and also embarked on his career as a physician in Ringoes. His was a thriving practice almost from the beginning; many of his patients were former students and their families, and they formed a solid base on which to build his clientele.

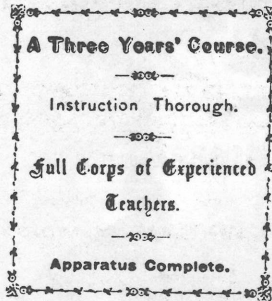
A doctor in Hunterdon County

The Seminary at Ringoes, N. J.

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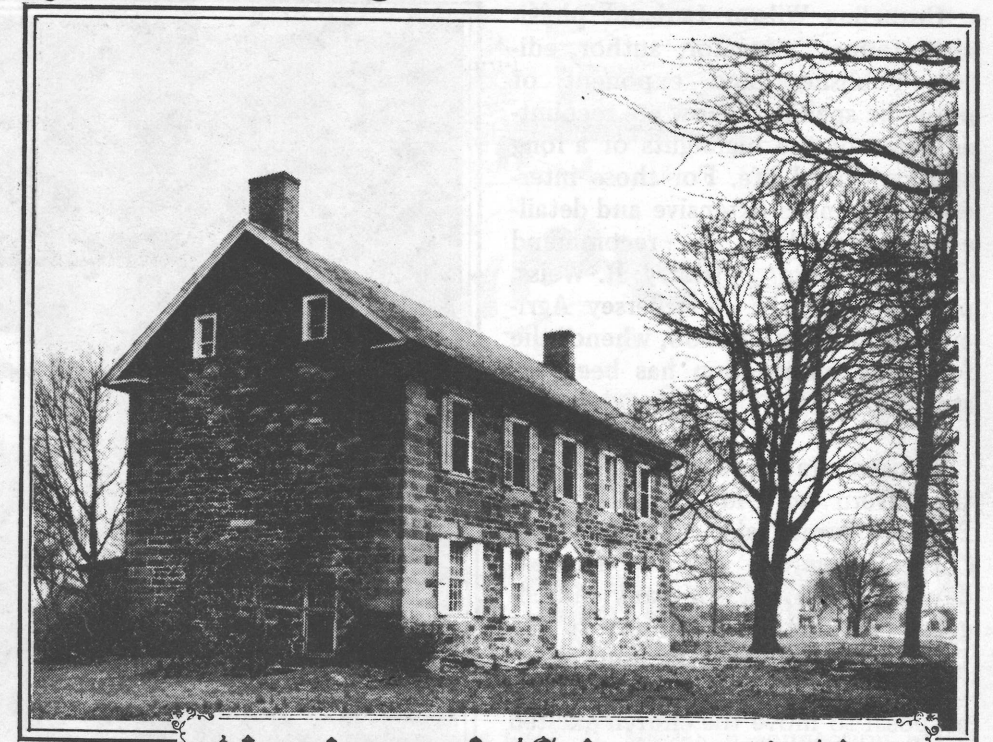
Ringoes, 1874.



came into contact with a number of diseases, among them, scarlet fever, diphtheria, measles, tuberculosis, small pox, erysipelas, croup, and rheumatism. Aside from these, his primary concerns were tending to accident victims and delivering babies. Larison, like other physicians of his era, relied mainly on his own five senses in the diagnosis of illness and disease. He also measured and mixed most of his own medicines, not a few of which were highly malodorous.

He made his house calls in a buggy, and was easily recognizable from afar by his black, wide-brimmed hat. He nearly always brought his daughter Mary along with him on his visits, and would take her right into the houses with him if no contagious diseases were present. When she was very small, she rode in an old wooden starch box at his side which was replaced by a little rocking chair when she outgrew it. It would be hard to say whether the father or his little girl enjoyed the other's company more on these trips.

He underwent several medical crises himself in the course of his years as a doctor, all of which he bore with unmatched stoicism and practicality. He survived bouts of erysipelas, small pox, and septicemia; reset his own forearm when he broke it, and his leg when he split the kneecap and tore ligaments in a fall. In all cases involving the ills that befell him, he insisted that any care he required be left to one or two personally chosen



Academy of Science and Art,

AT RINGOES, N. J.

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To the Lectures on

During the Term commencing

Lecture begins

nurses, never to a fellow physician. He applied this preference to the care of his patients as well. "In sickness or in health, medicine is of little value. . . A good cook and an attentive, kind-hearted, intelligent nurse is worth more to the sick than a fieldful of doctors who lack a proper knowledge of physiology, cooking, and the laws of hygiene. . ."

1867 saw the beginnings of the realization of a long-cherished dream. Despite ardent efforts by the well-established Presbyterians of Ringoes to prevent it, a lot of land was purchased by Cornelius Larison, and upon it was erected a Baptist church. For the next nine years he was an active and generous member of this church, and served as its clerk until 1874.

Around this time, he became involved in several other pursuits which show the breadth of his inclinations. He was a stockholder of the Ringoes Canning Company; a trustee of the Union Cemetery Association; and the organizer of a Lyceum, the intent of which was to enlighten and refine the community through weekly meetings revolving around scholarly and ethical topics.

These interests proved ephemeral, but another endeavor did not. In 1869, the Amwell Academy, built in 1811 and vacant for some thirty years, was acquired by Cornelius and

In 1869 C. W. Larison purchased the long defunct Amwell Academy and a year later reopened the institution as the Seminary at Ringoes with a staff of four. In 1876 he established the separate Academy of Science and Art also in Ringoes.

his brother Andrew. Their goal was to establish a boarding and day school. The Seminary at Ringoes, as it was called, opened on January 3, 1870, with a staff of four: Larison himself, as teacher of natural sciences; his brother, the Reverend Andrew Larison, principal and teacher of Latin, Greek, and mathematics; Andrew's wife, Katherine, who taught French and English; and Margaret Aller, a music instructor. At Cornelius' insistence, exercises, not much in vogue at the time, were also a part of the curriculum.

Upon Andrew's death in 1872, his brother became principal, and his widow, a partner in the Seminary. At this point, Mary Jane (wife of Cornelius) joined the staff as instructor of mathematics. Two years later, Dr. Larison relinquished his teaching responsibilities at the school, and Katherine Larison ran it on her own for the next six years, at the end of which time she was appointed Vice Principal of the University Female Institute at Lewisburg. From this position she went on to eventually become Principal. The Seminary closed its door in 1881, and thereafter served as a home to Mary Blackwell, Larison's daughter, who was also to run her own school there from 1898 until about 1907.

The reason for Larison's quitting the Seminary in 1874 was that he was appointed Professor of Natural Science at the University of Lewisburg (later Bucknell University). Having left his practice in the hands of his partner, Charles Lee, he stayed on at the University for only one school year. Perhaps the motive behind his resignation lies in an event that took place on one of his week-

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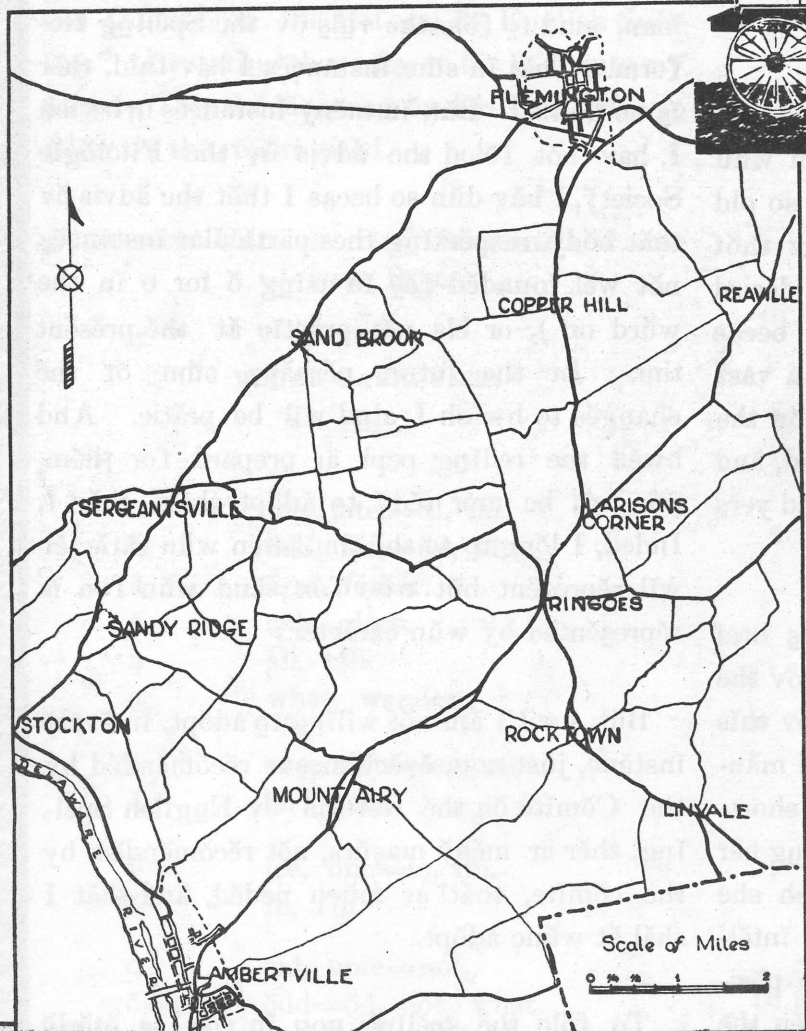
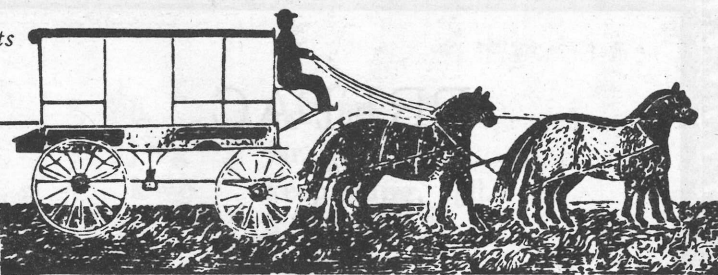
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C. W. LARISON, PRINCIPAL.

Ringoes, N. J., 1888

floor of the Academy of Science and Art. The biography of Silvia Dubois was among them. The titles of some of his other works give an idea of the variety of themes with which he dealt: *The Larison Family*, *Reminiscences of School Life*, *Reminiscences of a Teacher*, *The Physician's Oath*, *A List of Words Which Are Not Always Pronounced in the Same Way Even by Good Careful Speakers*, *What is the Soul? Has the Dog a Soul? Is the Soul a Substance? The Soul: Whence? Whither?*, *History of Ringoes*. As for periodicals, he published only one that met with lasting success — the *Journal of American Orthoepy*, later renamed the *Journal of Orthoepy and Orthography*, which survived for almost twenty-five years.

Cornelius Larison died in 1910 at the age of seventy-three. In the course of his life, he made an indelible impression on countless people: students, friends, patients, his colleagues in education, his community, and his family. A man blessed with the tenacity and drive to pursue life in the many directions his mind and heart led him, he will remain a legend for years to come in the town known as Ringoes.

Tari Pantaleo Miller

Milltown, and New Brunswick. Larison, his wife, his two children, and ten other students made the journey. Each day and each new place unveiled new wonders to these children, who probably saw more of the world than others of that age, thanks to the imagination and boundless energy of their teacher. What better way to learn geography than by studying the land; botany, by finding and dissecting real plants and flowers; zoology, by observing animals in their natural environment; history, by seeing where it was made and the marks it left behind?

All his life, the doctor maintained a lively concern for spelling reform. It was in 1881 that he published *Elements of Orthoepy*. The spelling reformer's objective was to eliminate from words those letters which had no phonetic use, and to mark the remaining letters in such a way as to preclude any question as to their pronunciation.

For the purpose of printing his own works, Larison purchased a printing press in 1885, and, with Mary Prall as printer and compositor, began to issue books, periodicals, and pamphlets from the Fonic Publishing House, located on the second



Mary Larison Blackwell accompanied her father on his house calls as a child. The map, above, records such places in Dr. Larison's life as Sandy Ridge, his birthplace, Rocktown and Copper Hill, where he taught, Ringoes, site of his many ventures.

ends home in the Spring of 1875. A group of old and loyal patients and friends gathered in his office to beg him to give up his professorship and return to Ringoes. He was a rare man, to inspire such strong sentiments and intense admiration in the people who knew him.

In August of 1876, the Academy of Science and Art at Ringoes, Dr. Larison's next project, welcomed a group of youths interested in the natural sciences. Housed in an unusual building built of riven basalt, the Academy's curriculum included subjects other than just the sciences, some of which were taught by Larison, others by his wife, and some by Mary Prall, who was the third person present at Larison's interview with

Silvia Dubois, presented in the following pages. The Academy would enjoy a modest but thorough success until a year before the doctor's death in 1910.

One of the highlights of studying at the Academy of Science and Art must have been the fabled field trips organized by Dr. Larison, which he describes at length in his book *The Tenting School*. There are two which his students seem to remember especially well. A five-day geography field trip in 1877 took the class through Rocky Hill, Dayton, Jamesburg, Englishtown, Colts Neck, Freehold, Long Branch, Deal, Squankum, Mosquito Cove, Point Pleasant, Toms River, Imlaystown, Cream Ridge, and Trenton. They rode in a horse-drawn carryall, camped out each night, and did all their own cooking. In 1882, a week-long tour of central New Jersey boasted an even larger itinerary: Woodsville, Blawenburg, Rocky Hill, Kingston, Monmouth Junction, Dayton, Jamesburg, Englishtown, Freehold, Barnegat, Bay Head, Manasquan, Sea Girt, Sea Plain, Ocean Beach, Ocean Grove, Asbury Park, Deal, Long Branch, Sea Bright, Oceanport, Eatontown, Tinton Falls, Leedsville, Holmdel, Matawan, Jacksonville, Old Bridge,



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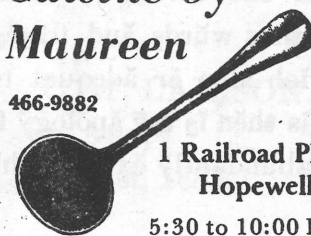
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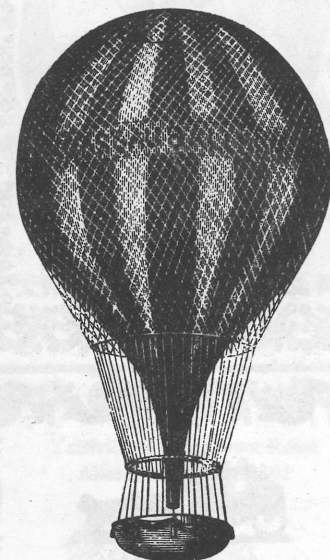
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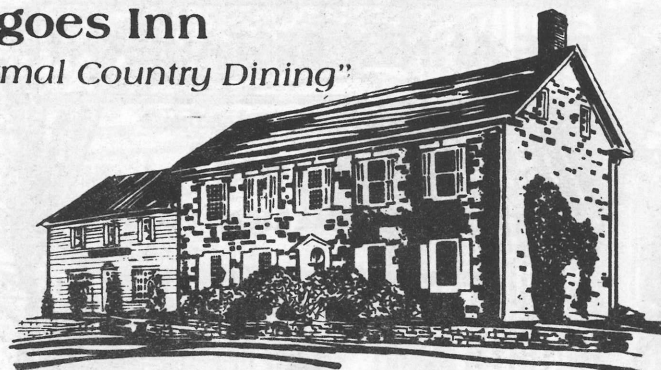
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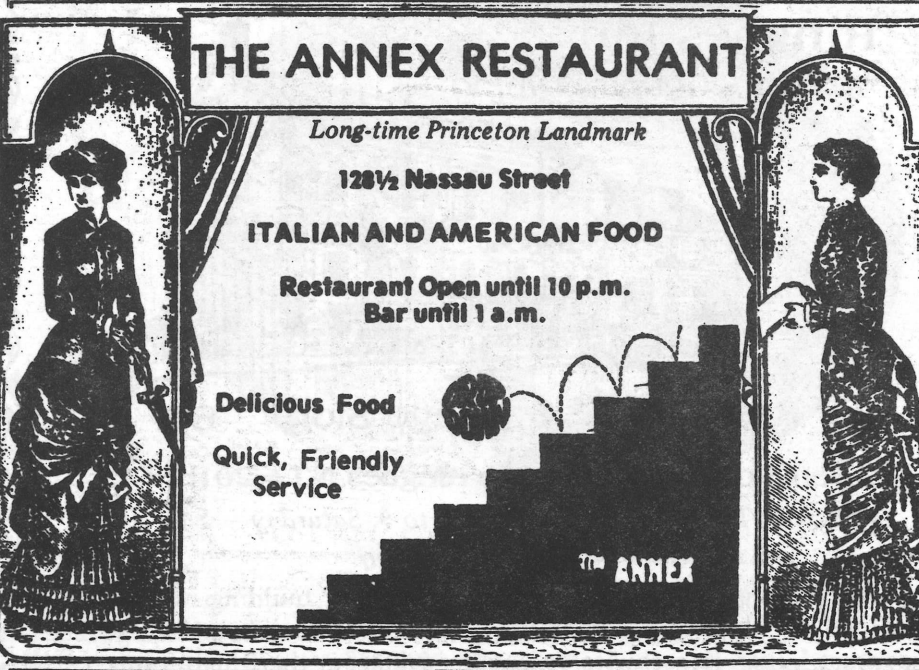
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PREFAC.

As mūeh intērest alwas ātāehēs to wūn whō līvs to ā vērŷ grat ag, ānd ās ā negrēs so old ās Sīlvīā Dubois īs sēldūm non, I hāv thōt thāt ān outlin biögrafy ōv hēr mit bē desidrd bŷ the redīng pūblīc. The mor so, beēas whīl gētīng the biögrafy ōv the heroin, ā vāst āmount ōv the cūstūms ānd mānērs ōv the pepl wīth hwōm she līvd īs ālso āequīrd, ānd ā knōlēdg ōv the was ōv folks ōv ā hūndrēd yers āgo gand.

In rītīng thīs, skēteh, I hāv bīn ās bref ās cīrēumstāncēs wūd ālou. As mūeh ōv the mātter ēntēring īnto thē cōmposīshūn ōv thīs bōk was gōtēn frōm hēr, īn ā cōloquīāl mānēr, ānd ās thīs was put ūpōn papēr, īn short-hānd, jūst ās she spok īt, ānd ās by gīvīng hēr on wūrdz īn the ordēr ānd styl īn whīeh she spok thēm, portrās mor ōv the cārāctēr, īntēllīgēnc, ānd forc ōv the heroin thān eān pōsīblŷ bē gīvēn īn ānŷ ūthēr wa, I hāv rītēn the most ēsēnshāl pārts ōv īt, ēxāctlŷ ās she relatēd the fācts to me.

The nārātīv ābōunds īn profānītŷ, ān ēlēmēt thāt īs fōrēn to me, ānd wūn thāt I most eor-dŷālŷ despīs, ānd sīncērly dēprecat. Būt, Sīlvīā īs ā profan negrēs; hēr lāngwāg alwas ābōunds īn profānītŷ; ānd, tērs ānd forcībl ās īt īs, cāstīgat īt ōv īts profan wūrdz, ānd īt īs flāt ānd menīnglēś, ānd ūtērly fals to conva the ideā īntēnēd, or to revel hēr cārāctēr. In the nārātīv, mŷ am īs mor to sho the cārāctēr, forc ānd spīrīt ōv īndēpēdēnc ōv thē heroin, thān to mak out ā lōng līn ōv yers; or to tēl wīth hōm she dwēlt. To ācōmplīsh thīs, I mūst us thos wūrdz ānd frāsēs peculīār to hērself, hwīeh ālon ār ādequat to thē tāsks befor me. Thīs thēn īs mŷ āpōlōgŷ for the profānītŷ thāt so ābūndāntly ēxīst īn thīs storŷ.

In the orthōgrafŷ ōv thīs bōk, I hāv, īn the man, ānd to fōlo the ruls ōv the Spēling Reform. Thāt īn sūm īnstāncēs I hāv fald, thēr īs no doubt. Būt, īn mēnŷ īnstāncēs īn hwīeh I hāv nōt fōlod the ādvis ōv the Fīlōlōgīc Societŷ, I hāv dūn so becas I thōt the ādvis ōv thāt bōdŷ, respēctīng thes pārtīculār īnstāncēs nōt wēl foundēd (ās īn usīng ō for o īn the wūrd or), or ēls nōt prāctīc āt thē prēsēt tim. In the futur, pērhaps, sūm ōf thē ehāngēs to hwīeh I alud wīl bē prātic. And hwēn the redīng pepl ār preparēd for thēm, nūn wīl bē mor rēdŷ to ādōpt thēm thān I. Indēd, I lōng to se thē tim hwēn wūn cārāctēr wīl rēprēzēt būt wūn fon; ānd wūn fon īs rēprēzētēd bŷ wūn cārāctēr.

Būt, hwīl I ām nōt wīllīng to ādōpt, īn ēvērŷ īnstānc, jūst nou, ēvērŷ masur rēcōmēndēd by the Cōmīte ōn thē Reform ōv English Spēling, thēr ār mēnŷ masurs, nōt rēcōmēndēd by the cōmīte, thāt ar mūch nedēd, ānd thāt I shāl āt wūnc ādōpt.

To fōlo thē spēling nou īn vog, īs ūtērly ābsūrd. Sūeh ā menīnglēś, jūmbllīng ōv cārāctērs ās ōcūr īn the prīntīng or rītīng ōv wūrdz ās found īn most bōks ānd neuspāpērs īs ūnpārdūnābl, ānd īnsūltīng to the tast ānd jūdgēmēt ōv āll redērs ōv cūltur. A feu yers āgo, ritērs cūd nōt safly dō ūthērwis thān to fōlo thīs cēnsurābl spēling; būt, sīnc thīs wīd-spred cōncērtēd ācshūn ōv the Spēling Reformērs—mēn ōf thē hīēst ānd brādēst cūltur, ānd so famūsly non ās crītics ānd tēchērs īn our Colegēs ānd Unīvērsītīs, thēr īs, āt thē bēst, būt pōr ēxcus for cōntīnuīng to spēl wūrdz wīth āfonīc cārāctērs.

As īt ma hāpēn thāt sūm hō ār nōt āc-qwantēd wīth thē Reformd spēling ōv the English lāngwāg ma red thīs bōk, to hēlp thēm to lērn thē neu orthōgrafŷ, ānd to fācīlītāt thar prōgrēs īn redīng thes pagēs, I her īnrōduc

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the ruls sūbmīted in the "Report ov the Amēricān Cōmīte on the Reform ov Engliš Spēl-
ing." In statīng thes ruls, so fār ās it suts mȳ
pūrpūs, I us the lāngwag ov Dr. F. A. March,
athūr ov the rēpōrt citēd.

ALFABET USD IN THE OETHOGRAFY OV THIS BOK.

VOUEL CARACTERS.

a	ale, fate,=al, fat.
ă	ădd, făt,=ăd, făt.
â	ârm, fătĥēr.
â	âsk, glâss.
ă	ăll, tălk.
ă	whăt, wănder.
e	eve, mete=ev, met.
ě	ěnd, mět.
i	īce, fine=īc, fin.
ī	īn, fīn.
o	old, note=not.
ô=a	ôdd=ôd, nôt, whăt.
o	prōve=prōv, dō, tō.
o	wōlf, wōl, bōk=bōk.
u	use, tube=us, tub.
ū	ūs, tūb.
u=o	rūde=rud, dō.
u=o	būll=bul, pūt, wōlf.
ȳ=i	fīȳ, īce=īc.
ȳ=i	cȳst, pīn.

CONSONANT CARACTERS, AND THE SOUNDS OR FONS THA REPRESENT.

b	bār̄n, rob.
c	call, colt.
ç	çede, traçe.
eh	ehild, muēh.
d	dale, sād.
f	fame, leaf.
g	go, gāg.
ğ	ğēm, gīn.

h	hāl, hăt.
j=g	jār, joke, gēm.
k=c	keep, kīng, call.
l	lēft, bēll.
m	make, age.
n	nēt, tēn.
ñ	līnk, ūncle, same
p	pay, ape.
qu	queen, cōnquēst.
r	rīp, fār.
s	same, yēs, çede.
š	hās, āmuse,
sh	shēlf, flēsh.
t	tone, nôt.
th	thīng, brēath.
th	thīne, wīth.
v	vane, wave.
w	wēt, wāg.
hw	hweat, hweel.
x	expēct, fōx=fōks.
ẏ	exīst=ēgsīst.
y	yāwn, yēt.
z	zone, maze.
z-h	azure=azhure.

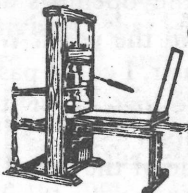
In printīng the bok, I hāv usd the diacrītīc
tȳp preparēd to print mȳ bok ēntītlēd Elements
ov Orthoepy. Thīs maks the spēlīng ov the
wūrds—ās the spēlīng ov ēvēry wūrd shūd be
—fonīc. (For ā discūshūn ov fonīcs ānd fonīc
spēlīng, se mȳ "Elements ov Orthoepy," or
mȳ Fonīc Spēlēr and Sȳlābatēr.)

Bȳ usīng the diacrītīc tȳp ānd fōlōīng the
fonīc orthōgrāfȳ, the nūmbēr ov pagēs, in the
bok īs ābout wūn fīfth lēs thān wūd be, hād
I fōlōd the āfonīc spēlīng. Bȳ usīng the
diacrītīc tȳp, no doubt īs lēft rēspēctīng the
pronūnciashūn ov ēnȳ wūrd; by thīs mēthōd,
ēēh fon in ā wūrd īs rēprēsēntēd bȳ ā sutābl
cārāctēr; ānd wīth feu ēxçēpshūns thēr īs no
cārāctēr in ā wūrd thāt dūs nôt rēprēsēnt ā
fon.

C. W. LARISON.

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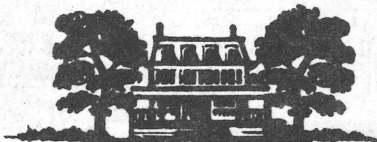
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Sourland Native Silvia Dubois Entertained Larison in Mountain Cabin

Continued from page one

fallen out, and the openings admit alike the light and the wind. Within reach over my chair, I could pass my hand between the logs, until it was entirely out of doors.

Upon either side of the door, from the log plate that cups the front wall to its counterpart upon the back wall, extend oak rails, with the flat splintery sidedownward. This forms, upon either side of the door, a small loft, upon which are piled bundles of clothes, bedclothes, and bedding, and I know not what else. To get upon these lofts, there are neither steps nor ladder; and yet they are handy. Standing upon the floor, a tall person can reach to almost any part of them, and take down, or put away, anything desired. I noticed that the chairs that were not in use had been placed upon one of these lofts out of the way.

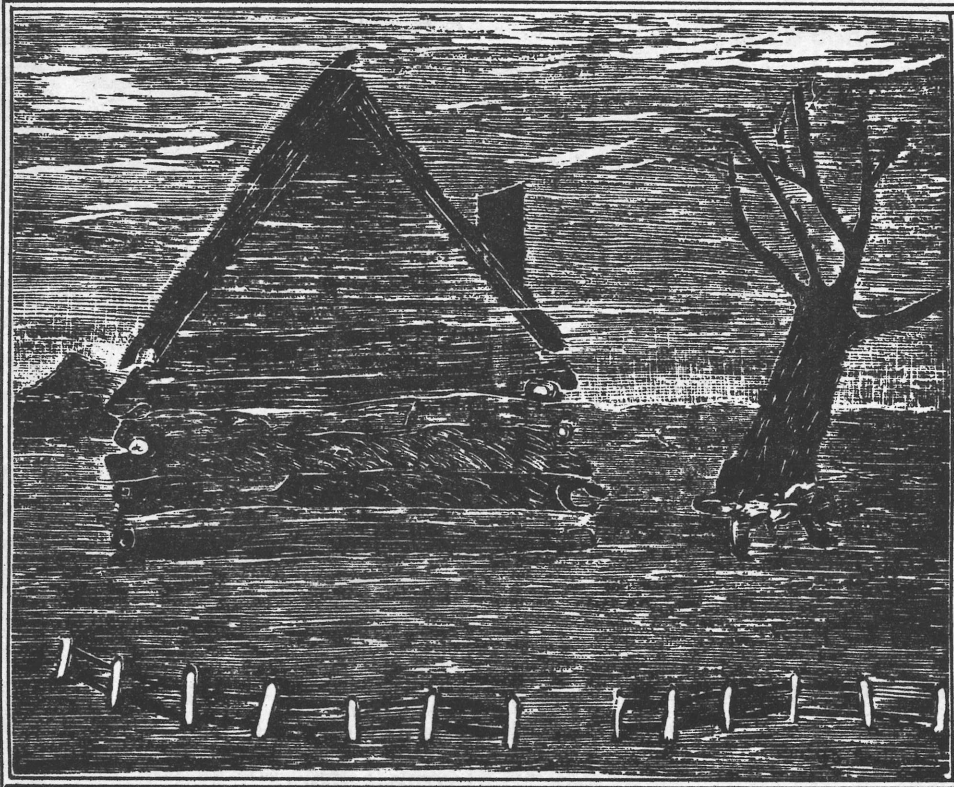
The logs out of which this house is built served a term of years in the wall of another house. The primitive house which was an earlier mansion on this lot was built a long while ago. In the course of time the ends of the logs of that house rotted off, and the edifice became unsafe. Thereupon, one afternoon about eighteen years ago, Elizabeth convoked her neighbors, in the capacity of a frolic, as such gatherings are here called, to reconstruct her mansion. According to her plan, they took down the old building, notched the logs back a suitable distance from the end, and piled them up in such a way that, out of the usable material of the old house, they constructed the pre-

sent edifice. We are told the old house was somewhat larger on the ground, somewhat higher, and in every way more stylish than the present mansion.

The household furniture, so far as I could see, consisted of an old-time

attending a fire in a smokehouse.

The room was not well lighted. As my eyes became accommodated to the degree of lightness of the room, I saw a dusky form closely snuggled up in the narrow space between the stove and the wall. The elderly lady



The original Biograpy ov Silvia Dubois contains the two primitive woodcuts here reproduced, which were executed by Larison, himself, or one of those in his circle. Both illustrate the log home of Elizabeth Dubois where Silvia spent her last years.

cook stove, a dinner pot, a water pail, six chairs, a small cupboard and some bedclothes that appeared to have been long in use, and not well protected from dirt. The cook stove is one of that pattern which was in use thirty to forty years ago. It was made for burning wood. It is now much the worse for wear. There is yet remaining of what it once was a part of each fire-door, and a considerable number of the top plates. But the fire is well aired; it has an abundance of draught from every side. Although I saw no pile of wood out of doors from which they could draw, the stove was fed well, the sparks rushing past furiously. And, although my back was a little cold, my shins and knees were about as hot as I have ever had them, and my eyes were as well filled with smoke as they have ever been, not excepting the times during which I have been

that we desired to see had fixed herself here in the warmest part of the room, and she was asleep.

I scanned her closely. Though sitting, her sleep was as tranquil as that of a babe. Her head, tied up with a handkerchief, after the usual manner of colored ladies, was bowed forward, so that the chin rested upon her fleshy chest. Her hands were folded upon her lap, while her feet were extended beneath the stove. Her countenance was severe, but serene.

Her apparel was reasonably whole, and not dirty. There seemed to be enough of it, and adjusted entirely in accordance with the genius of the African race.

At length, we announced that we had come to interview the aged lady, Mrs. Silvia Dubois. Hereupon, her daughter roused her mother and told her that parties had called to see her. The old lady did not awake from her slumber quickly. Nor did she quickly comprehend that she had visitors. But, as aged folks usually do, she awoke slowly, a part of her at a time, as it were. At first she moved her hands and arms, then rubbed her face; then she moved her body upon the chair, and in the course of some minutes, she began to realize that she had guests, and that she must entertain them. Thereupon, adjusting her clothes, and quickly turning her head toward me, she ejaculated: "Who are these?" To this her daughter replied: "Why, Mommy! Dr. Larison, his daughter, and Miss Prall. They want to see you — they want to talk with

you."

Quickly and sternly she replied: "Want to see me! I don't know why they should want to see such an old thing as I am." I told her that I had come to talk with her, to learn what I could respecting her great age, her course of life, the history of her family, the customs of the people who lived a century or more ago, and her present welfare and her future prospects.

With this statement Silvia seemed pleased, and announced that she was ready and willing to inform me respecting matters as far as she was able. At once she assumed an attitude and an air that showed she was "all attention" and ready to talk. I had provided myself with paper and pencil to take down in shorthand her language as it fell from her mouth. I informed her of this, and requested the privilege that I might print and publish anything that she told me. To this request she replied, "Most of folks think that niggers hant no account. But if you think what I tell you is worth publishing, I will be glad if you do it. 'Twont do me no good, but maybe 'twill somebody else. I've lived a good while, and have seen a good deal, and if I should tell you all I've seen, it would make the hair stand up all over your head."

Silvia is in good health, and in good condition of mind. Her memory is excellent; and she is as much interested in the affairs of life as are most people at thirty-five. She looks as if she may live many years yet. She remains hale, hearty, witty, and as pious as ever. The flash of her eye still is like the gleam of a falcon. Her gait is firm, her voice clear, her hearing acute, her vision excellent. She eats well, drinks well, and smokes better. Her memory is excellent, and she takes as much interest in passing events as would one of forty years. She enjoys a joke as well as ever, and tells one with exceeding grace. Her laugh is as indicative of merriment as that of a wench of eighteen.

Silvia is large of stature. In her palmy days, she has been not less than five feet ten inches high. She informs me that she usually weighed more than two hundred pounds. She is well proportioned, of a nerve-lymphatic temperament, and is still capable of great endurance. Years ago she was known to be the strongest person in the settlement, and the one who had the greatest endurance.

In the struggle for life, Silvia was embroiled in many a combat. In her fights, it is said, she engaged alike man or woman, black or white, beast or bird — anything but God or devil. According to her, she cared but little for fist or feet; but sometimes when they came down upon her with wood and steel, she did wince a little. But woe to the combatant that dared to resort to those unfair implements of war. At best, even with these, they could only wound her — just enough to exasperate her to do justice to the occasion. For, when rigged for a fist fight, never enough stood before her, nor gathered around her, to discomfit her, or to

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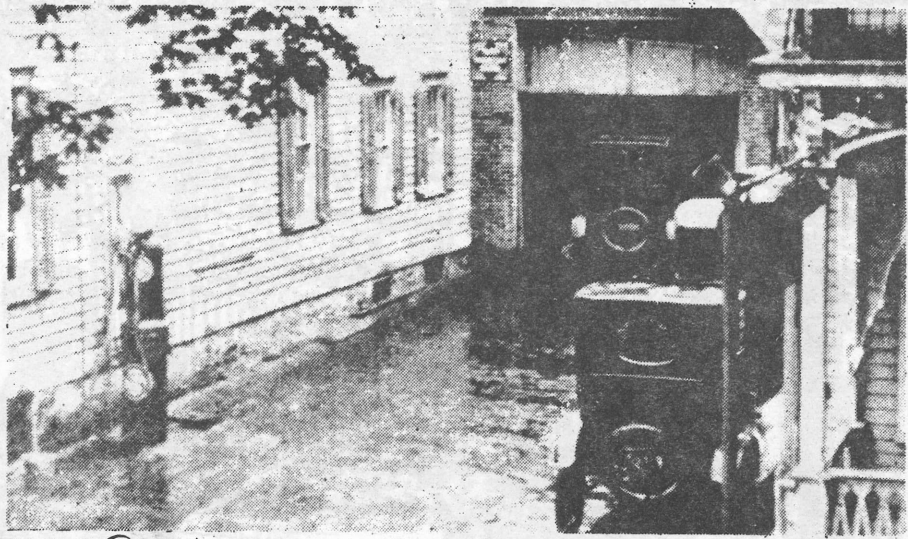
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At One Hundred Sixteen Years of Age Silvia Still Evidenced Vivacity

keep her upon the sod. Respecting her prowess, Silvia's testimony is not all that I have gathered. Different men, whose venerable looks show that they are old enough to remember scenes that they witnessed sixty and seventy years ago, tell me that they have seen Silvia in battle many a time, and that her courage and her ability were always adequate to any emergency.

However, tradition states that Silvia was neither quarrelsome nor aggressive. On the contrary, she was decidedly a peace-maker. Some of her most noteworthy feats were accomplished when suppressing a row or parting combatants; indeed, her presence often prevented a fight. For if the fight began contrary to her will, often she, to make them more obedient in the future, and to terrify others of a quarrelsome or pugilistic nature, would severely whip both the combatants.

Nor was she less likely to interfere in cases where there was a free fight. In cases in which there were from five to ten in a fight, Silvia has been known to wade in to seize wherever handhold was easiest, and to throw one Negro in one direction, and another in another direction, until the last fellow was hurled from the arena of fight. Such feats, owing to her great size, and greater strength, she accomplished with ease, and it is said that such were her deliberations that she would return from such scenes in the utmost composure.

Although she always came out from the field victorious, sometimes she did not come off unscratched. Upon her head I found numerous other scars, most of which, Silvia says, are the results of wounds inflicted by her mistress. But she says some of them are not. These are, according to her, the results of wounds incurred during other wars, waged after she gained her freedom.

She was industrious, and was usually in great request during the housecleaning and soap-making season of the year. Everybody wanted Silvia to help clean house and to help make soap. She was so strong she could lift anything that needed to be moved, and could carry anything that needed to be toted. And she was so willing to use her strength that her popularity was ineffable. So Silvia went everywhere, and everybody knew her, especially the children, who, as a rule, were wonderfully afraid of her.

According to her own account, to children she was not very wooing. On the contrary, she used to take delight in telling them goblin stories, and in making them afraid of her. She used to tell them that she would kidnap them, and that she would swallow them alive; and, it is said, to children, she looked as if she might do such things.

Usually, children kept out of her way. Usually, when they saw her coming, they sought refuge — in the company of older folks, in some secluded place, or in a footrace. As a joke, she tells a story respecting an occurrence in the boyhood of a certain individual now well advanced in years. He, a little more bold than the average boy of ten years, on one

occasion ventured to be a little sassy to her, and for the time, kept out of her way. But a few days after, while he was busy playing in a garden, around which was a high picket fence, Silvia entered the gate about the time the lad saw her. To try his

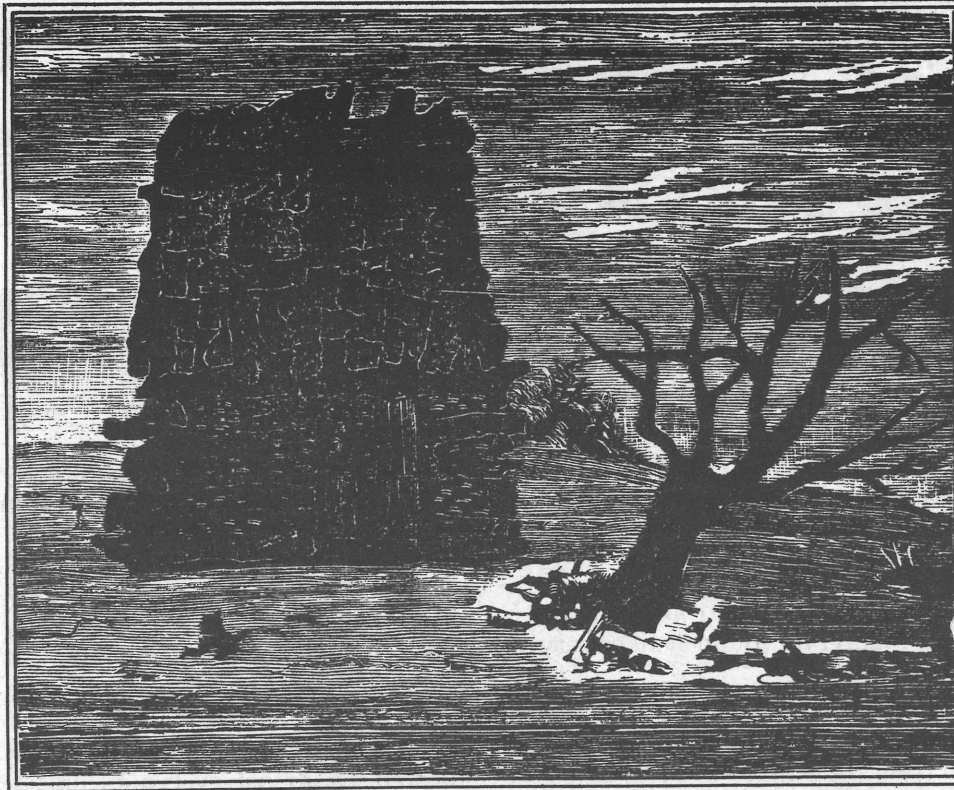
for Silvia. Freedom is the goal; freedom of speech, freedom of labor, freedom of the passions, freedom of the appetite — unrestrained in all things. To enjoy this, she would go to any extremes — even to the extremes of living upon the charity

vinistic faith is not easy; she says she grew up among the Old School Presbyterians, that she saw their ways were good and that she adopted them, that is, those of their ways that suit her. She says, "If one will only do right, Providence will provide for him. 'Taint no use to worry — it only makes things worse. Let come what will, you've got to bear it — 'taint no use to flinch. Providence knows best. He sends to you whatever He wants you to have, and you've got to take it, and make the best of it. I've always got along somehow, and I always will — but sometimes it's pretty damned hard sledding, I tell you."

Silvia never fidgets. When she sits, her hands rest in her lap, and she is as motionless as a statue. When she stands, she is as firm as a tree. When she walks, her gait is precise and adroit. While talking, she gesticulates not a little; but in the maneuvering of her hands, there is much grace, and marked propriety. She is a hearty laugh, but her laugh is agreeable. In the act of laughing, her whole frame is in motion, so much so, that one might think she'd shake the soles from her shoes.

With all her vivacity, she shows decline. During the last year, she has grown old rapidly — has become emaciated and somewhat bowed. Further, her mind shows decline, and her conversation indicates that she is verging toward the end of life. She talks much of death, and of dying, and seems willing to die.

Cornelius W. Larison



In this view of the Sourland cabin, the faithful dog, Joe, is included along with one of the fruit trees Larison describes. Attempts over the last thirty years to locate the house or its remains have been fruitless.

mettle, she exclaimed, "Now I have you, sir!" Up he bounced! Every limb was in motion! The high pale fence was a trifling barrier — one awful yell he gave, and then through the raspberry briars and over the fence he went like a cat and, howling lustily as he ran, disappeared from view by creeping under an old barrack.

Unto Silvia have been born six children: Moses, Judith, Charlotte, Dorcas, Elizabeth, and Rachel. Rachel lives in Princeton. Lizi owns and resides upon the lot described in this article. She is a large and stout woman, and looks as if she might live to be as old as her mother. Lizi is about seventy-eight years of age but she is so well preserved that she would pass for a Negress of forty.

Lizi Dubois is far famed as a fortune teller. To hear her descant upon the events of his life, many a young fellow wends his way to the humble hut of this sable lady, and, elated with the information gained, drops his piece of silver into Lizi's hand, and hastes away to watch secretly the unfolding of every mystery. Nor is her stock of lore barren of witchery. From afar, the votaries of witchcraft go to Lizi in quest of knowledge respecting stolen goods, and other things that are supposed to be known only to those who are in communication with the spirits of the nether abode.

Silvia's love of freedom is boundless. To be free is the all-important thing with Silvia. Bondage, or even restraint, is too near akin to death

of her acquaintances, in the hut in which we found her: away from civilization and culture, with but little to eat, with less to wear, and the poorest kind of shelter. Thus she gains the object of her desire. And she is indeed free — every passion is free, every desire is gratified. Less restraint I never saw in any person — nor indeed could there be.

Silvia's good spirits do much towards prolonging her days. Her matter-of-fact way of viewing life prevents worry and keeps the machinery of her system from friction. That which wears out the machinery of the human frame more than any other one thing (I had almost said more than all else combined) is worry. From this Silvia is ever free; she has that firm reliance upon Providence that entirely prevents any anxiety about the future. To find one better bottomed upon the Cal-



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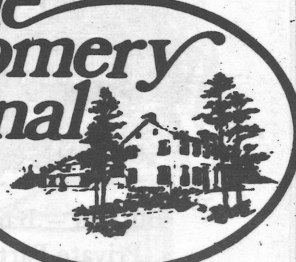


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Silvia Dubois inherited from her grandfather, Harry Compton, an ancient mountain tavern, famous for ill fame, which once stood upon the North side of the road that extends westward from the Rock Mills, near its intersection with the road that extends from Wertsville to Hopewell.

The founder of this house, and for many years its proprietor, was Harry Compton, the fifer, of note in the army of the Revolution. Harry was slave to General Rufus Putnam, who sold him to Captain Reiner Staats, who sold him to Richard Compton, from whom he bought his time and became free. As General Rufus Putnam was his first master, and more distinguished than either of the other two masters, Harry was often called after his first master, Harry Putnam; indeed, this name he preferred. Accordingly, when he became the proprietor of a hotel, and a man of note as a mountain tavernkeeper, they called him Harry Put for short, and the house that he kept was usually called Put's Tavern.

Harry Put had an instinctive desire to be free. Being industrious, frugal and honorable, he managed to buy his time of his master, Richard Compton. Charcoal being much in demand in those times, he turned his attention to the burning of coalpits, and at this business accumulated a little money. With his earnings he purchased a site and erected a house. His social qualities, and the supply of liquor always on hand made his house a popular place of resort. Soon he found it necessary to enlarge, so



Silvia's grandfather, Harry Compton, better known as "Put," was an early free black, who operated the famous (or infamous) hostelry rear Rileyville in the Sourlands.

rapidly did his patronage increase; and finally, he found it necessary to rebuild.

The new house, tradition says, was somewhat pretentious. It consisted of four large rooms upon the first floor, and a half story, suitably divided into rooms above. Along the entire front was a porch, and the windows and doors were ample. Nearby stood the sheds and other necessary outbuildings, the whole surrounded by a virgin forest that extended for miles in every direction.

It is hardly to be supposed that Harry Put, a slave, whose high spirit prompted him to make the sacrifices necessary to purchase his freedom, had a vicious tendency. It is easier to believe that he was an industrious, easygoing, flexible, far-seeing Negro, who, unschooled in ethics, and freshly liberated from bondage, had not a just appreciation of freedom and morality, and, withal, a strong greed for gain, and a desire to be popular. Thus he became a fit tool for such as desired to frequent a house so far removed from the gaze of the law-abiding and the pious, so that, while there, their passions could be unbridled, their acts unseen by the virtuous, and their deeds unknown except to the basest of men.

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Harry Putnam's house, although far famed and much frequented, especially by sporting characters, was never licensed. In early times, the selling of whiskey and other intoxicating liquors as a beverage, was allowed to almost everyone, unless, by so doing, the vendor became very offensive. In the place where Harry's house was built, even an extravagance in the sale of liquor, or in the demonstrations consequent upon the use of it, was less likely to be complained of than to be encouraged. Consequently, in peace and prosperity, he managed his business, accumulated wealth, and became renowned. His house, far removed from the gaze of the cultured and the pious, became the scene of cock fights, fox chases, hustling matches, prize fights, and the like. Indeed, Put's Tavern became famous as a place of resort for all as indulged in such games, or liked to be present where such things transpired. It was the center for the dissolute. From afar, renowned gamblers came. Tradition says many were the pounds, shillings, and pence they carried off with them, and many were the young men and young women ruined in that house.

At Put's House, color was but little regarded. Blacks and whites alike partook in the pastimes or the business of the occasion. That the blacks were regarded equal with the whites, there may be some doubt; but that the blacks were as good as the whites, there is no question.

Twenty years ago I was physician to several old gamblers, whose maladies were incurred by frequenting this celebrated house of ill fame, and the consequent intercourse with such as congregated there. Although the mishaps leading to disease occurred during boyhood, or early manhood, the *materes morbi* were never eradicated, and these old offenders of nature's laws, as they grew older, constantly needed the care of a medical advisor. Although they were wont to curse the day they learned

to foend, and deplored the shame and misery which their offenses had brought them, yet often, while I was engaged in preparing medicine for them, they used to delight in telling me of the grand old times they used to have in their young days at Put's Old Tavern. They were scenes perpetrated by intellectual but lewd men of the basest passions, fired by whiskey and hilarity, in an atmosphere entirely free from decency or shame. Thus let loose, in company with their peers, their passions worked out such things as could be done only by the most daring, the most lustful, and the most wanton. To those who know only a fragment of the history of this ancient house, it is not a wonder that there are so many shades of color in the population of the neighborhood of Cedar Summit, nor that in those of lighter shades, there is so much tendency to vice, and crime.

The guests that visited Put's House were not all from the mountain, nor yet from the adjacent valleys. Far from it — from Trenton they came, and from Princeton, and New Brunswick, and New York, and Philadelphia, and even from cities farther away. The news of a cock fight, an old gamester says, usually spread through a community and reached the ears of gamblers faster than the stink of a skunk traverses the air of a valley. The same old wit used to say that the ear of a gamester is as sharp to hear the report of a cock-fight as the nose of a vulture is to scent a dead horse.

That the house was better kept after it descended into the hands of our heroine, or that the guests that frequented it were of a higher order, is much to be doubted. In Silvia's time, Put's Tavern was regarded only as a cake and beer house. But there seems to be an abundance of evidence that other drinks could often be got there. Indeed, on one occasion, it is said, the house was visited by an officer of the law, and the proprietor, free of charge, enjoyed a ride to the county seat.

However, the tavern's popularity waned, and its patrons were those of less note. As the demand for timber increased, the wood upon the side and the top of the mountain was cut away; the sun shone in upon places that hitherto were dark, the land in places was tilled, and civilization and virtue encroached upon the environs of the scene of the dissolute. Put's Tavern became a thing of approbrium, and in the year 1840, it was burned to ashes.

Silvia much complained of the loss of property caused by the conflagration. All that she had was in this building; beds, chairs, books, culinary apparatus, and whatever else is necessary to keep and outfit a mountain tavern. The fire occurred during her absence. She states that she is satisfied that the house was plundered before it was burned. In evidence of this, she states that several articles of furniture and several books (one, a Bible containing the family record) were found scattered over the mountain, some in one house, some in another. But it seems she was never able to reclaim even one of these things.

Such is the history of the house that was the arena, tradition says, of the vilest deeds that were ever perpetrated in Hunterdon County.

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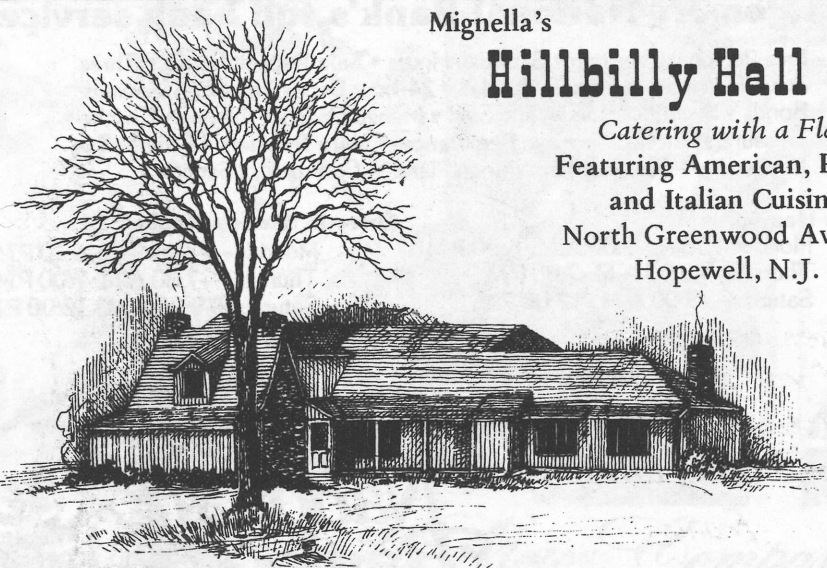
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Born in 1768, Silvia Dubois Well Recalled Her Days as a Slave

"I was born on this mountain in an old tavern that used to stand near the Rock Mills; it stood upon the land now owned by Richard Scott. The old hotel was owned and kept by Richard Compton. It was torn down a long while ago, and now you can't tell the spot on which it stood.

"My parents were slaves, and when my master moved down to Neshanic, I went along with them, and when my master went to Great Bend on the Susquehanna, I went with him there. Afterwards I lived in New Brunswick, and in Princeton, and in other places. I came back to the mountain because I inherited a house and a lot of land, at my grandfather's death. That's what brought me back to the mountain.

"I can't tell exactly how old I am. They didn't used to keep a record of the birth of niggers. They hardly kept a record of the birth of white children — none but the grand folks kept a record of the birth of their children. They didn't no more keep the date of a young nigger than they did of a calf or a colt. The young niggers were born in the Fall or in the Spring, in the Summer or in the Winter; in cabbage time or when cherries were ripe; when they were planting corn, or when they were husking corn. And that's all the way they talked about a nigger's age.

"There is a reason that makes folks say that I am a hundred and fifteen years old. They tell this by the record of the birth of Richard Compton. My mother and many other folks used to tell me that when my mother was a slave to Richard Compton, there was born to him a son, whom they called Richard, after his father. When this son Richard was two days old, I was born, so there is but two days' difference between the date of Richard Compton's birth and my birth.

"In an old Bible which is now in possession of Mr. Richard Gomo, who lives near Rock Mills, is the record of the Compton family. By referring to this record they tell how old I am. But I do not know how old I am — I can't read — but I expect that they tell me right. I know that I am older than anybody else around here, and older than their parents were. And in most cases, I knew their great-grandparents.

"I remember that when we were small children I and Richard Compton were about of a size, and that we used to play together. My mother and his mother used to tell me that we both nursed the same breast, alternately, the same day. As we were so near the same age, when his mother wished to go away to visit, or upon business, Richard was left in the care of my mother; and while his mother was away, he used to nurse my mother with me. Once, Mrs. Compton and one of the neighbors was gone to the city a whole week, and while gone, Richard was left in my mother's charge. Then she used to take us both upon her lap, and



SILVIA DUBOIS
THE HEROINE OV CEDAR SUMIT
BORN MARCH 5th, 1768

while he was nursing one breast, I was nursing the other. They used to say that this was the reason that Richard and I got along so well together. As long as he lived, he always claimed to be about my age, and we always visited, and we used to talk over the circumstance that we used to be together when we were babies, and when we were children, and that we had always visited, and always intended to visit.

"A great many old folks used to tell me that they had seen me nurse my mother at the same time that Richard Compton was nursing her. As we lived at a tavern, I expect folks saw us more, and that more folks noticed us than would have done so in a less public place."

"My father was Cuffy Bard, a slave to John Bard. He (Cuffy) was a fifer in the battle of Princeton. He used to be a fifer for the minutemen, in the days of the Revolution. I remember when my father and

others returned from the battles of Trenton and Princeton. But I was younger then, and only remember that it was Winter, and that they had complained that they had suffered so much from cold and exposure.

"My mother was Dorcas Compton, a slave to Richard Compton, the proprietor of the hotel at Rock Mills. When I was two years old, my mother bought her time of Richard Compton, with Minical Dubois going her security for the payment of the money. As my mother failed to make payment at the time appointed, she became the property of

Minical Dubois. With this failure to make payment, Dubois was greatly disappointed and much displeased, as he did not wish to fall heir to my mother and her children, as slaves to him. So he treated Mother badly — oftentimes cruelly. On one occasion, when her babe was but three days old, he whipped her with an ox goad because she didn't hold a hog while he yoked it. It was in March, and the ground was wet and slippery, and the hog proved too strong for her under the circumstances. From the exposure and the whipping, she became severely sick with puerperal fever; but after a long while she recovered.

"Under the slave laws of New Jersey, when the slave thought the master too severe, and the slave and master did not get along harmoniously, the slave had a right to hunt a new master. Accordingly, my mother Dorcas went in quest of a new master, and as Mr. William Bard used to send things for her and her children to eat, when Dubois neglected or refused to furnish enough to satisfy their craving stomachs, she asked him (Bard) to buy her. This he did. And she liked him well, but she was ambitious to be free. Accordingly, she bought her time of Bard, but failed to make payment, and returned to him his slave.

"She was then sold to Mills Smith, who was a kind master, and a good man. But she was still ambitious to be free, so, of Smith she bought her time, and went away to work, and to live with strangers. But as she failed to make payment at the appointed time, she was taken back as a slave, and spent the remainder of her days with him, and was buried about forty-five years ago upon his homestead.

"Of course, I remained a slave to Minical Dubois. He did not treat me cruelly. I tried to please him and he tried to please me, and we got along together pretty well — excepting sometimes I would be a little refractory, and then he would give me a severe flogging."

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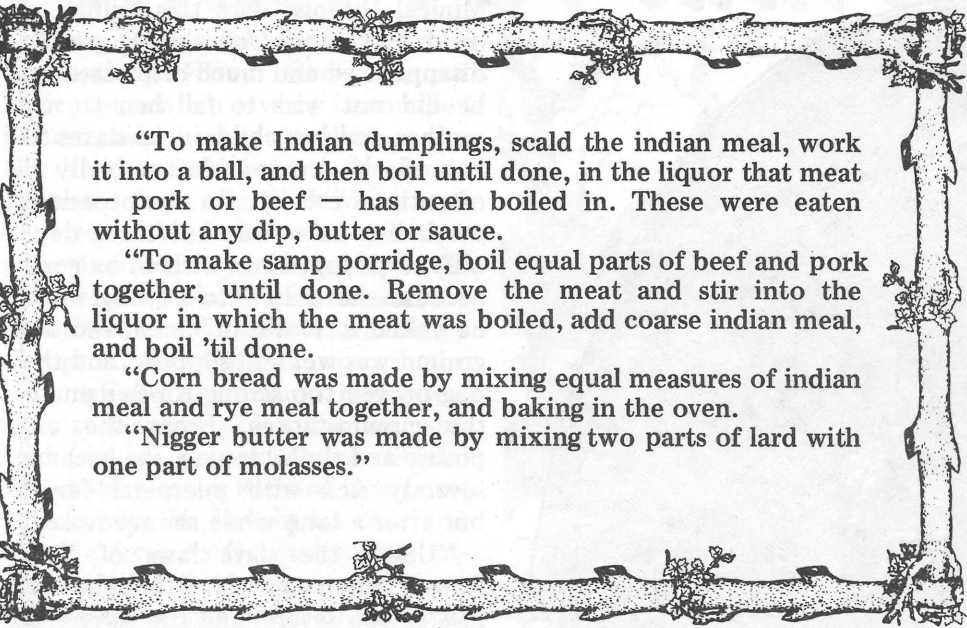
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"To make Indian dumplings, scald the indian meal, work it into a ball, and then boil until done, in the liquor that meat — pork or beef — has been boiled in. These were eaten without any dip, butter or sauce.

"To make samp porridge, boil equal parts of beef and pork together, until done. Remove the meat and stir into the liquor in which the meat was boiled, add coarse indian meal, and boil 'til done.

"Corn bread was made by mixing equal measures of indian meal and rye meal together, and baking in the oven.

"Nigger butter was made by mixing two parts of lard with one part of molasses."

"The old masters knew how to take care of their niggers. We had good beds to sleep in. The ticks were filled with straw, and we had plenty of woollen blankets and coverlets, as they used to call 'em. The fires were all made of wood and usually they were big. The fireplaces usually extended entirely across one end of the kitchen — fifteen to twenty feet wide, with large stone jams that made 'em three or more feet deep, and provided with a chimney that two or three could climb up or stand in, side by side. In the back part of this huge fireplace, a large back-log — as much as two or three could carry — was placed, and upon the hand-irons, another log called a fore-stick — as much as one man could carry — was placed; and then between this back-log and fore-stick was piled smaller wood, until it made a fire that would scare the young folks of this generation out of their wits. This big fire not only warmed, but also lighted the room. As a rule, the niggers had no other light, and no other fire than this. They had to stay in the kitchen. This was their part of the house, and here they had good

times, too. The white folks were in another part of the house, where the fireplace was not quite so big. Sometimes the white folks had stoves, and then they lighted their rooms with tallow candles. There was no kerosene then, nor any coal. They didn't know how to use such things.

"They gave us Indian dumplings, samp porridge, corn bread, potatoes, pork, beef, mush, and milk, and nigger butter. And we didn't get a bellyful of these sometimes — I've often gone to bed hungry, but 'twas no use to complain. You had your measure and you got no more. That's the way they fed young niggers in old times, but they made 'em grow.

"This nigger butter was what we had to use on our bread, and we did well if we didn't have to spread it deuced thin. The bread was so hard that it needed greasing, and this was all that we had to grease it with — we had no gravy.

"We used to have pies occasionally. Sometimes they were made out of sweet apples, sometimes out of sour ones, without any sugar or molasses. Didn't feed niggers sugar and molasses much in those days. The white folks didn't get much of 'em either — their pies were almost as sour as ours. And there was very

little sugar in their coffee, and the sugar that they used was as black as my hide.

"We never drank coffee or tea. Sometimes we got cider. The white folks only drank tea and coffee on Sunday, or when they had company.

"They used to boil or roast our potatoes with the skins on, and then we didn't take the skins off, we ate 'em skins and all. And the white folks ate theirs just so, but they had gravy or butter to put on theirs. The white folks didn't eat wheat bread only on Sunday, or when they had company. They ate rye bread. They didn't cultivate much wheat — 'twouldn't grow; never had more than enough to make piecrust and cakes out of. They ate a great deal of mush and samp porridge, and Indian cakes, and these were good enough if you had a plenty of good milk and butter and gravy to eat with 'em.

"I expect folks nowadays think that this was hard fare, but 'twas good enough — when we had enough of it. But sometimes we didn't get a bellyful, and that went a little hard. If the folks nowadays would live as we used to, they'd be a good deal stronger, more healthy, and wouldn't die so soon. They eat so many dainties: too much sugar, too many sweet puddings and pies, too much rich cake, and too much fresh bread. And they drink too much coffee and tea.

"People today don't dress warm enough, either. That calico ain't the thing for health. We used to wear woollen underclothes, and our skirts were always made of linsey-woolsey. Our stockings were woollen, and our shoes were made of good thick leather, so heavy that you could kick a man's tripe out with 'em. This is the way we used to dress, and it was a good way, too."

"When I was about five years old, we moved upon a farm near the village of Flagtown. While there, I had good times — a plenty to eat, a plenty of clothes, and a plenty of fun. Only my mistress was terribly passionate and terribly cross to me. I did not like her and she did not like me, so she used to beat me badly. On one occasion, I did something that did not suit her. As usual, she scolded me. Then I was sassy. Hereupon she whipped me until she marked me so badly that I will never lose the scars. You can see the scars upon my head today, and I will never lose them if I live another hundred years.

"When I was about ten years old, the battle of Monmouth occurred. I remember well when my master come home from that battle. Cherries were ripe, and we were gathering harvest. He was an officer, though I do not know his rank. He told great stories about the battle, and of the bravery of the New Jersey

militia, and about the conduct of General Washington. He said they whipped the British badly, but it was a desperate fight. He told us that the battle occurred on the hottest day he ever saw. He said he came near perishing from the excess of heat and from thirst, and that a great many did die for the want of water.

"Before the battle of Princeton my master had been a prisoner of war. He had been captured while fighting on the water, somewhere near New York. I used to hear him tell how he and several others were crowded into a very small room in the hold of a vessel — the trapdoor securely fastened down, and the supply of fresh air so completely shut off that almost all who were thus imprisoned died in a few hours. In this place they were kept two days. Dubois, by breathing with his mouth in close contact with a nail-hole, held out until he was removed. Two or three others were fortunate enough to find some other defects in the woodwork, through which a scanty supply of air came."

"When I was in my fourteenth year, my master moved from Flagtown to his farm along the Susquehanna River. This farm is the land of which the village called Great Bend has been built. When we moved upon the farm, there was but one other in the settlement for the distance of several miles. These two houses were built of logs. The one upon my master's farm had been kept as a tavern. It was an important

I have read the article on Silvia Dubois, and it is very interesting. I am familiar with all those places mentioned in the Sourland Mountains. I had an aunt and uncle raised in those mountains. I have been to all of those small villages mentioned in the piece, although many years ago.

I would very much like to do some illustrations for you on the article, hoping I can do it justice. Let me know what scenes you would like and I will do my best and be prompt.

William Earl Hubbard
Pennington, N.J.

stopping place for travelers on their way to the Lake Countries, and to others places Westward. Also, it was a place much visited by boatmen going down and up the river. Here, too, came great numbers of hunters and drovers.

"In moving to Great Bend, we went in two wagons. We took with us two cows; these I drove all the way there. After we crossed the

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Silvia's Master Helped Found Settlement on the Susquehanna



Delaware at Easton, the road extended through a great forest, with only here and there a cleared patch, and a small log hut. Even the taverns were only log huts, sometimes with but one room downstairs and one upstairs.

"The great forest was called the Beech Woods. It was so big that we was six days in going through it. Sometimes we would go half a day without passing a house or meeting a person. The woods was full of beasts: panthers, wildcats, and the like. About those I had heard a great many wild stories. So I made sure to keep my cows pretty close to the wagon.

"Usually, we stopped overnight at a hotel. But as the houses were small, often it would happen that others had stopped before we arrived, and the lodging rooms would be all occupied. Then we would sleep in the outbuildings or in our wagon. In those days, travelers had to get along the best way they could.

"As my master saw that the site upon which he lived was favorable to business, during the third Summer after our arrival, he erected a large new frame house — the first house in Great Bend not built of logs. Then he began to do a large business and became a very prominent man there,

as he was while he lived in New Jersey.

"Already, several people had moved to the neighborhood, erected log houses, cleared the lands, and begun to cultivate fields and raise stock. Very soon, in the village, storehouses and mills were built. Indeed, Great Bend began to be the center of a large and thriving settlement.

"At this time, hunters used to come to this point to trade: to sell deer meat, bear meat, wild turkeys, and the like, and to exchange the skins of wild animals for such commodities as they wished. They used to stay at our tavern, and they were a jolly set of fellows. I liked to see them come — there was fun then.

"There was a ferry across the Susquehanna at Great Bend. The boat upon our side was owned by my master; the one upon the other side was owned by Captain Hatch. I soon learned to manage the boat as well as anyone could, and often used to ferry teams across alone. The folks who were acquainted with me used to prefer me to take them across, even when the ferrymen were about. But Captain Hatch did not like me. I used to steal his customers. When I landed my boat upon his side, if anybody was there that want-

ed to come over to the Bend, before he knew it, I would hurry them into my boat and push off from the shore, and leave him swearing. You see, the money I got for fetching back a load was mine; and I stole many a load from old Hatch — I always did, every time I could.

"Along with the ferryboat, always, were one or two skiffs. These we took along to have in readiness in

case of accident. When the load was heavy, or when it was windy, two or more ferrymen were required. At such times I would help them across, but I always come back alone in the skiff. In this way, I got so I could handle a skiff first-rate, and was very fond of using it. Oftentimes I used to take a single passenger over the ferry in a skiff, sometimes two or more at once. This I liked, and they used to



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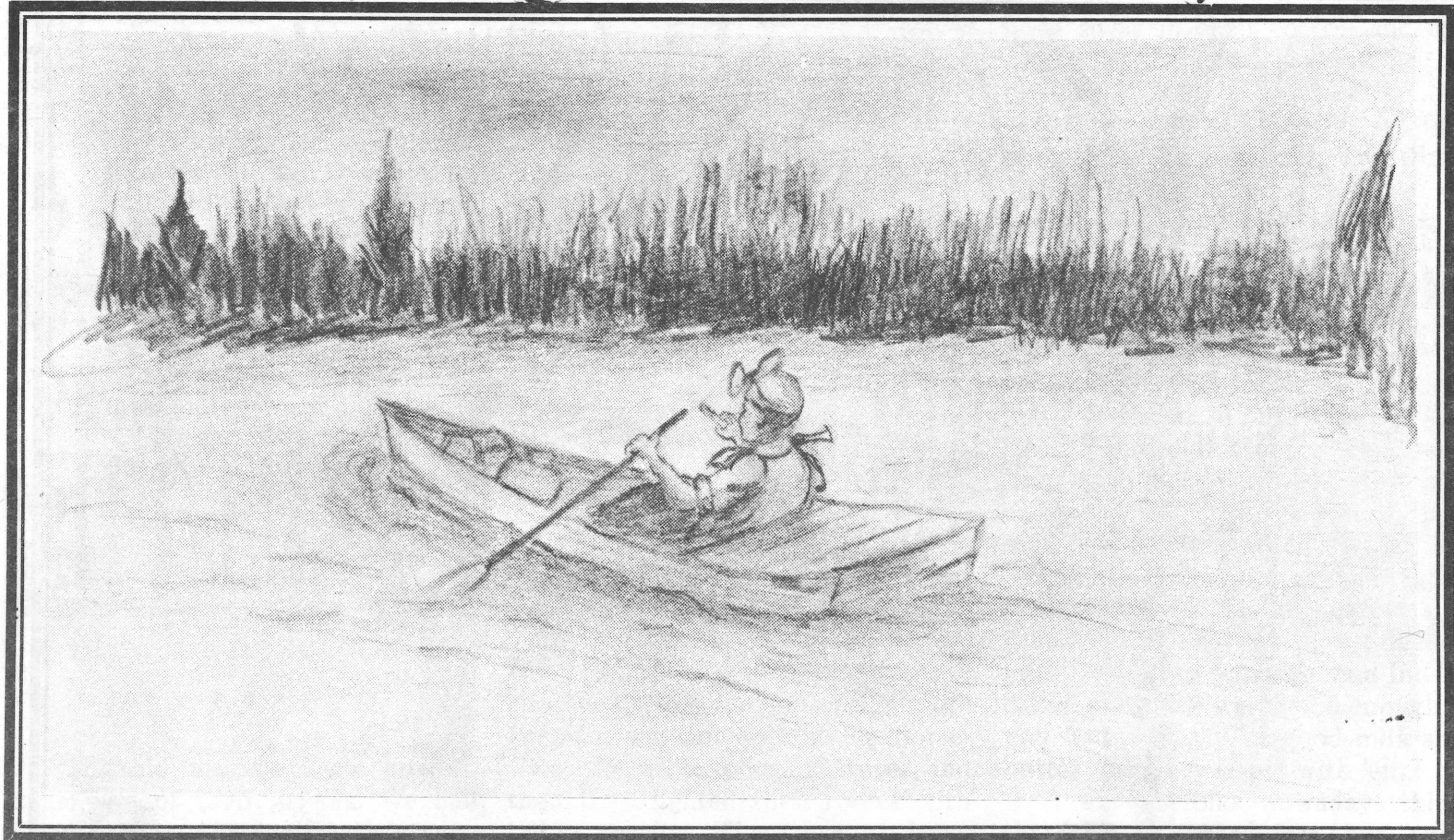
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Men Like Washington Were Brave, Handy, and Could They Dance!



pay me well to do it. I had a good name for managing the skiff and I could beat any man on the Susquehanna. And I always did beat all that raced with me.

“Oftentimes, when the ferrymen were at dinner, someone would come to the ferry to cross. I’d skip out, and down to the wharf so soon that I’d have ’em loaded and pushed off before anyone else could get there — and then I’d get the fee. I tell you, if they did not chuck knife and fork and run at once, ’twas no use — they couldn’t run with me. The fee was gone. I’ve got many a shilling that

way, and many a good drink, too. And my master didn’t care. He thought I was smart for doing it. And sometimes, if I had not been in the habit of hurrying things up this way, people would have waited at the ferry by the hour. But, you see, they didn’t have to wait when I was about, and this is why they liked me, and why my master liked me, too.

“The big yankees from New York State and New England used to come to our house, and they were fine-looking men, all of ’em were. And they were very tall, and very straight, and very dignified, and their wives were well-formed and beautiful, and very dignified women. And they were all very polite — had the best of manners — and were the most accomplished folks I ever saw. And they were all good dancers, the best of dancers, and they never got tired of dancing. Even the old men and old women danced. And they were just as good figures as you ever saw, and very graceful.

“Why! the men of the age of my master looked brave. They were tall and commanding, and stout of limb, and graceful and handy. They had good faces, great high foreheads, and large bright eyes, and broad mouths with good teeth. They stood up straight, and walked with freedom and ease. I tell you, in those old times there were good-looking men, brave-looking men — they were all so. General Washington was, and Lafayette was, and my master was, and all the great men that I ever saw were, and they were all good dancers, and danced whenever they had a chance. They used to say that General Washington was the most beautiful dancer in America, and that he could even beat the Marquis de Lafayette.

“Why, I had first-rate times! In the long nights of Winter, we often had frolics, almost every week. Old Minical always let me go. There was a great many niggers around the neighborhood of Great Bend, and sometimes we’d meet at one master’s house, and sometimes at another’s. We was sure to have a fiddle, and a frolic, and a first-rate time. But none of ’em had a better time than myself — I like frolics. I could dance all night, and feel as jolly as a witch the next day. I never tired at frolics — not I. We’d hardly get over one frolic when we’d begin to fix for another.

“Then there was the holidays: Christmas, and New Year, and Easter, and the Fourth of July, and General Training. Why, the old slaves no more knew the meaning of Christmas than the hogs in the pen! They only knew that it was a holiday, and that they were turned loose for some fun, and of course, they had it.

“To be sure, they danced! Folks could dance then. Why, there were some of the best dancers up there that I ever saw. Folks knew how to dance in those days.

“Last Winter they made a party over here, at one of the neighbor’s, and they invited me over, and I went. They had a fiddle, and they tried to dance, but they couldn’t — not a damn one of ’em. They can’t dance a bit. You can’t dance unless you have the step, and they were as awkward as the devil. And then they were so damned clumsy. Why, if they went to cross their legs, they’d fall down. Nobody can dance much without crossing the legs. But they couldn’t do it — they’d get tangled in the riggin’ and capsize. Why! they cantered over the floor like so many he-goats.

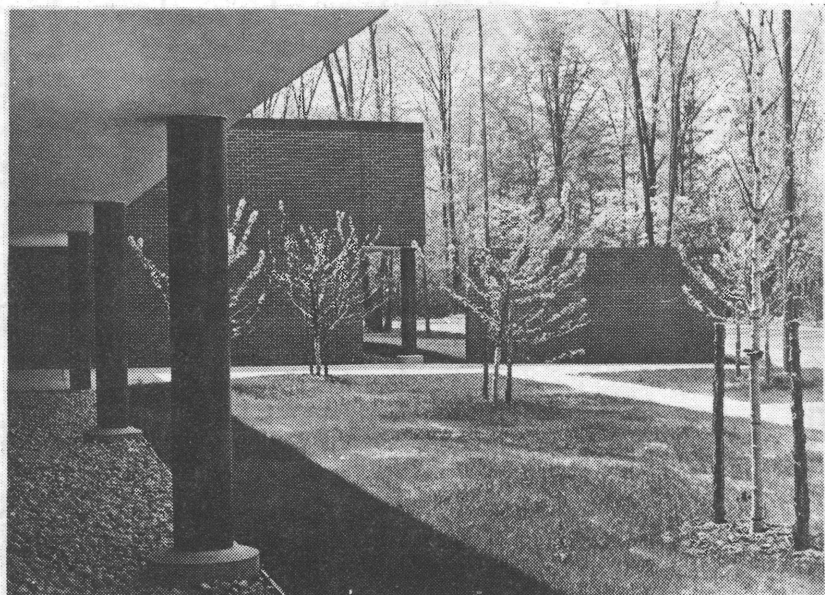
“Nowadays, young folks think

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Silvia, in her own way, was not a little religious, and was well used to speaking the name and words expressive of the Supreme Being. Indeed, I have seldom known a clergyman, even when an excellent Hebrew and Greek scholar, to be more familiar with these terms than Silvia, nor more in the habit of using them. But, while the clergyman uses these terms mainly in speaking of the goodness and omnipotence of God, and in invoking His blessing, Silvia seemed to use them in an interjectional, or an adjectival way to embellish her language, and to give force to her expressions.

Silvia’s familiarity with that other being called the Devil is by no means limited. Indeed, it seemed that every title, appellation, and epithet that had ever been used in reference to his Satanic Majesty, she handled with peculiar freedom and ease. Indeed, the prolificacy of her mind in this direction is transcendent. For she extemporaneously, and without hesitation, coins an overflow of self-explaining compounds that seem to fully meet the demand even of her own extreme cases.

And, as it will detract very greatly from the merits of her discourse, in case I omit this part of her language, I beg my readers the privilege of leaving the words in her phrases, just as she uttered them, as much as is bearable.

Even so, at times Silvia became so excited, so eloquent in her own way, and so indulgent in her profane epithets, that I feared that I would not be able to take down all that she said, nor be able to fit up for the press what I did take down. Indeed, when she began to tell about the treatment of the Negroes during the days of slavery, she at once waxed eloquent, and soon became so vehement, that I did not know whether it was wise to prosecute my inquiries any further in this direction. At almost the first question, I thought I smelt the fumes of brimstone; and as we proceeded the sulfurous odor became so strong that I feared that by her powerful gesticulation and the peals of her terrific language, she had rent the crust of the earth somewhere near where she sat, and the fumes from the infernal regions were ascending through the fissure into the apartment in which we sat.



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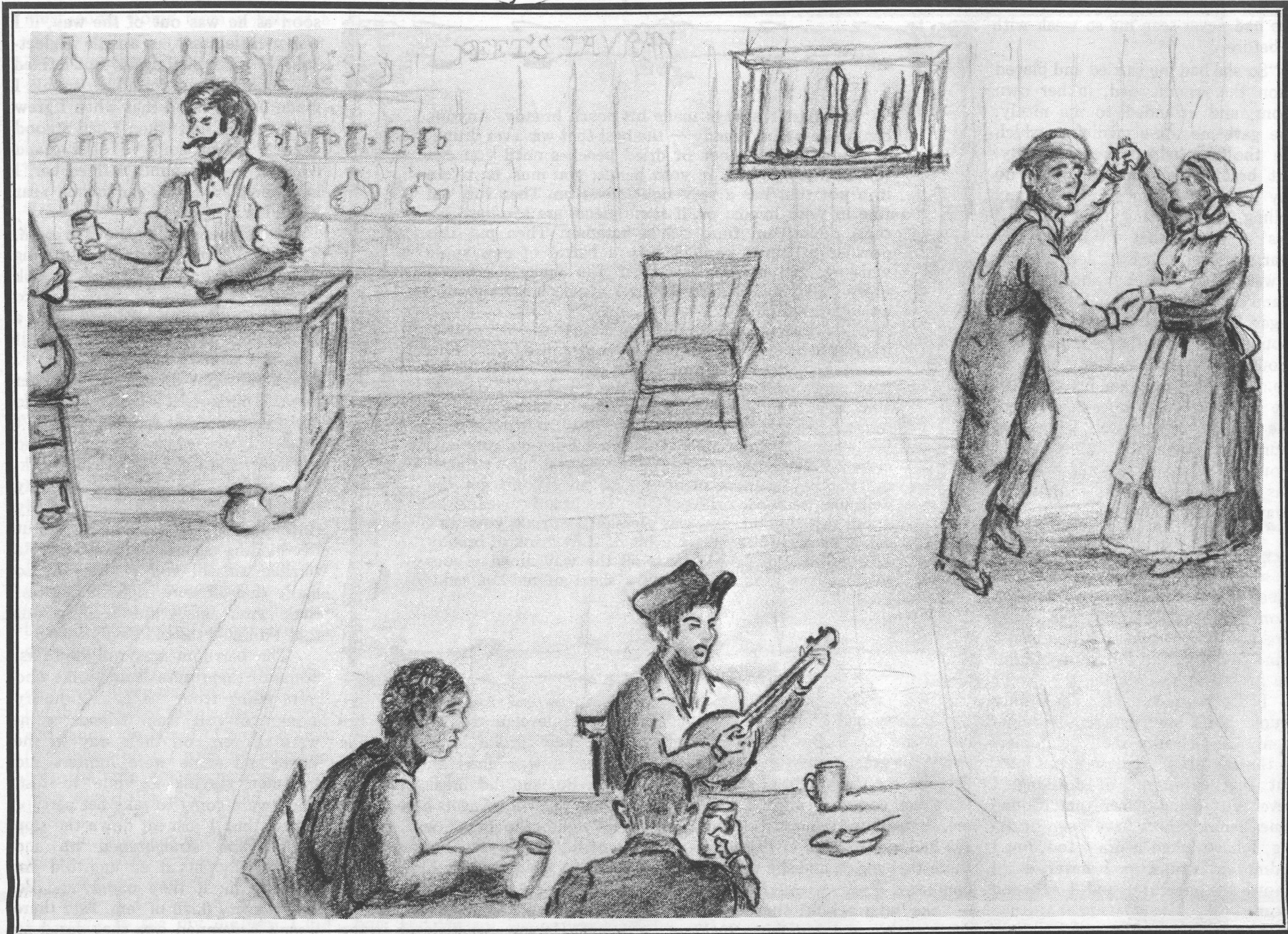
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Silvia Could Make Brandy as Well as Her Master; Drink It, Too!



they're great things, and very handsome. But they ain't. They're poor, scrawny mortals — make no appearance, and can't do nothing. They think they can — they stomp, and jump, and hop, and run, and like enough turn heels over head, then they call it dancing. But it isn't dancing. They don't know how to dance. They've got no steps! They're so clumsy that when one takes a foot from off the floor, somebody has to hold him up while he shakes it. And then when they reel, they push and crowd like a yoke of young steers, and they bang each other until they are in danger of their lives.

"I took a step or two, but I couldn't do it as I used to when I was young. They thought I did well, but they don't know — they've never seen good dancing. Why, when I was young, I'd cross my feet ninety-nine times in a minute and never miss the time, strike heel or toe with equal ease, and go through the figures as nimble as a witch.

"I liked the eleven times, the twelve times, and the thirteen times; these were the best steps for me. These were the steps that my grandfather Harry Compton used to like, and he was considered the best dancer on the mountain, or any-

where else in these parts. I have seen him, when he was old, dance at Princeton, and everybody who saw him said he was the best dancer that ever was.

"I could dance yet, only had a good fiddle. I like music. A good fiddle always starts the Negro, even if he's old. I don't think I'll dance this Christmas. Guess I'd better think about something else. Folks of my age had better think about dying. But I like to see 'em dance — it looks good."

* * * * *

"When my master moved into his new house, we had a big time. All the grand folks were there, and I tell you, things were lively. We had plenty of brandy, and they used it, too — a big time, I tell you. Aye, aye! the biggest kind of time. I had brandy, too, but not 'til towards night. I had too much to do; I had to see to the rest. I knew where everything was, and I had to help get them. But I looked out for myself. There was one keg of brandy that I knew was made very good, for I helped make it. We used to make our own brandy, and I always helped my master make it, and knew just as well

how to do it as anybody.

"I left this keg 'til it was the last thing to be moved; then when I and a certain fellow began to move it, we concluded that we'd see if it had kept well. We had no cut, so we drew it out in an earthen pot. Then he drank, and then I drank, 'til we drank all we could; but still there was some left in the pot, and we couldn't get it back in the keg, for we had no funnel. We didn't want to throw it away — that looked so wasteful — so we concluded we'd drink it up. So he drank, and I drank, 'til it was gone. This made us pretty full, but we started with the keg. By and by it begun to be too heavy, and then it got down and we got down. And then I knew there'd be a time, because I knew if my master saw me, I'd get a hell of a lickin'. And some of the rest knew that, too. And they didn't want to see me licked, so they got me up, and helped me off toward the house to put me to bed.

"I used to be subject to the

cramps, and sometimes I used to have it very bad, so that my mistress used to give me medicine for it. At once, a little before, I was so bad with it that she thought I was going to die with it. Well, I thought now I had better have the cramp, and then maybe I wouldn't get licked. So I began to have pain, and soon it got pretty bad — worse than I had ever had it before. Anyhow, I made more full than I ever had before, and yelled a good deal louder.

"Pretty soon they called Missy, and she was awfully frightened. She thought I would die, sure; she said

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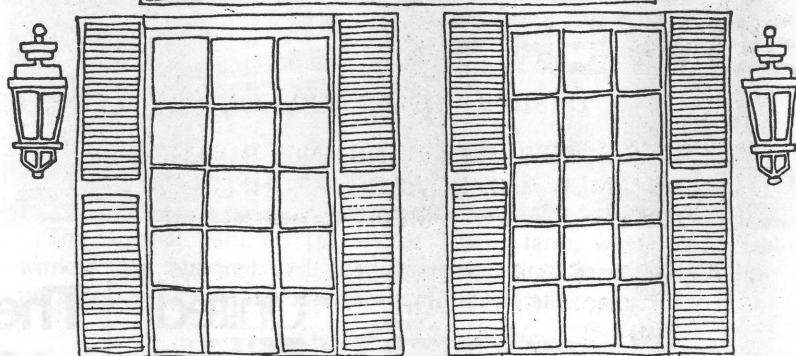
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she had never seen me so weak with it before.

"So she had me carried and placed upon the trundle bed, in her own room, and attended to me nicely. She gave me some medicine, which she thought helped me amazingly. But before the medicine could do any good, the rum stopped all my yelling, and grunting, too. In fact, I was so drunk that I couldn't see, hear, nor feel. For a while I thought I was dead, but by and by, the brandy began to wear off, and I began to see. I cautiously squirmed around to see whether anybody was about, and there sat Missy, fanning me. I cautiously opened my eyes just the least bit to see how she looked. She looked very pitiful. I was too drunk to laugh, but, 'My God,' thought I, 'if you only knew what I was doing, you'd throw that fan away and give me hell.'

"At night, my master came to bed very late. When he came in to undress, I was making believe that I was asleep. I didn't dare to get well too soon. At once, Mistress began to tell him how sick I was, and how near I came to dying. But I didn't fool him. He looked at me a little, then went to bed. He said, 'Pah! She's only drunk. She's been drinking with the men. Go to sleep — she'll be all right in the morning.' And so I was, too, but that cured me of drinking; I never got drunk after that. Sometimes when others have been drinking, I have taken a dram too, but I didn't get drunk — I never do. I know my measure, and I take no more.



"My master always made his peach brandy. Anyone can make peach brandy — the best that was ever drunk. You just burn pounds of dried peaches until you can rub them to powder in your hands; you must burn 'em in a pot that has a very tight cover on. Then rub 'em fine in your hands; or, if some pieces are too hard for that, pound 'em fine with a hammer. Then put this powder of burnt peaches into a barrel of new apple whiskey, and in four weeks, if you shake the barrel every day, you will have a barrel of peach brandy good enough for anybody.

"You make apple brandy in almost the same way. You burn about four pounds of apples dried with skins on. Make them into powder, and put 'em in a barrel of new apple whiskey, and shake the barrel every day for four weeks. In four weeks you have a barrel of apple brandy better than any you ever saw. A little of that will make a fellow talk — and won't burn his guts out, either. Folks used to drink brandy right along — drink it every day. Drank a plenty of it, and didn't get the delirium tremens, neither. Why, the brandy used to be good, tasted good, and was pleasant to drink; you can't get none such now — not a bit of it. A drink of brandy now burns like fire — burns all the way down — goes through the guts worse than a sheet of red-hot sandpaper."

"If Missy had known, she'd killed me if she could. But I have laughed about it a great many times. I spoiled her fun for that night — she had to leave her company and take care of me. It was pretty hard for her, for she had a great deal of big company there that night, and she was hell for company.

"She wasn't kind to me — why, she was the very devil himself. Why, she'd level me with anything she could get hold of — club, stick of wood, tongs, fire shovel, knife, axe, hatchet — anything that was handiest. And then she was so quick about it, too. I tell you, if I intended to sass her, I made sure to be off a ways.

"Once she knocked me 'til I was so stiff that she thought I was dead. Once after that, because I was a little

sassy, she leveled me with the fire shovel, and broke my pate. She thought I was dead then, but I wasn't. But she did break my skull. You can put your fingers here, in the place where the break was, in the side of my head, yet. She smashed it right in — she didn't do things to the halves.

"My master knew how passionate she was. He saw her kick me in the stomach so badly one day that he interfered. I was not grown up then; I was too young to stand such. He didn't tell her so when I was by, but I have heard him tell her that she was too severe, that such work would not do, she'd kill me next — this, when they thought I was not listening. Did it make her any better?

"Not a bit. Made her worse — just put the devil in her. And then, just as

soon as he was out of the way, if I was a little sassy, or a little neglectful, I'd catch hell again. But I fixed her. I paid her up for all her spunk. I made up my mind that when I grew up I'd do it, and when I had a good chance, when some of her grand company was around, I fixed her. I knocked her down, and blame near killed her.

"It happened in the barroom. There was some grand folks stopping there, and she wanted things to look pretty stylish, and so she set me to scrubbing up the barroom. I felt a little grum, and didn't do it to suit her. She scolded me about it, and I sassed her. She struck me with her hand. Thinks I, it's a good time to dress you out, and damned if I won't do it! I set down my tools, and squared for a fight. The first whack, I struck her a hell of a blow with my fist. I didn't knock her entirely through the panels of the door, but her landing against the door made a terrible smash, and I hurt her so badly that all were frightened out of their wits, and I didn't know but that I'd killed the old devil.

"The barroom was full of folks. Some of them were Jersey folks who were going from the Lake Country home to visit their friends; some were drovers, on their way to the West; and some were hunters and boatmen staying a while to rest. They were going to take her part, of course, but I just sat down the slop bucket and straightened up and smacked my fists at 'em and told 'em to wade in, if they dared, and I'd thrash every devil of 'em. And there wasn't a damned one that dared to come.

"Then I got out, and pretty quick, too. I knew it wouldn't do to stay there, so I went down to Chenang Point, and there went to work.

"My master was going to tend court at Wilkes-Barre. He was a grand jurymen, and had to be gone many days. He often served as grand jurymen, and then he was gone a week or two. Things would have gone better if he had been home. When he came home, he sent for me to come back, and, of course, I did. I had to go. I was a slave, and if I didn't go, he would have brought me, and in a hurry, too. In those days, the masters made the niggers mind, and when he spoke, I knew I must obey. Them old masters, when they got mad, had no mercy on a nigger. They'd cut a nigger all up in a hurry: cut 'em all up in strings — just leave the life, that's all. I've seen 'em do it many a time.

"I got along with my master first-rate. He was a good man, and a great man, too. All the grand folks liked Minical Dubois. When the great men had their meetings, Minical Dubois was always invited to be with 'em, and he always went, too. He was away from home a great deal. He had a great deal of business, and he was known all over the country. I liked my master, and everybody liked him. I was a good Negress and always tried to please him. I had good times when he was around, and he always done things right. But you mustn't get him mad.

"He never whipped me unless he was sure that I deserved it. He used to let me go to frolics and balls, and to have good times away from home with other black folks, whenever I wanted to. He was a good man and a good master. But when he told me I

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As a Free Woman, Silvia Worked for Tulanes at Cedar Grove

must come home from a ball at a certain time, when the time came, the jig was out — I knew I must go. It wouldn't do to disappoint Minical Dubois.

"He didn't scold me much. He told me that, as my mistress and I got along so badly, if I would take my child and go to New Jersey, and stay there, he would give me free. I told him I would go. It was late at night. He wrote me a pass, gave it to me, and, early the next morning, I set out for Flagtown, New Jersey.

"I went to Flagtown on foot, to be sure. I came right through the Beech Woods, all alone, excepting my young one in my arms. Sometimes I didn't see a person for half a day; sometimes I didn't get half enough to eat, and never had any bed to sleep in — I just slept anywhere. My baby was about a year and a half old, and I had to carry it all the way. The wood was full of panthers, bears, wildcats, and wolves. I often saw them in the daytime, and always heard 'em howling at night. Oh! that old panther — when he howled, it made the hair stand up all over my head.

"At Easton I went on board of a raft to go down the Delaware. A man by the name of Brink had his wife and family on board of a raft bound for Philadelphia. I went on board to help the wife, for my passage. They were nice folks, and I had a good time. I left the raft not far from Trenton, but I do not know exactly where — there was no town at the place at which I got off the raft.

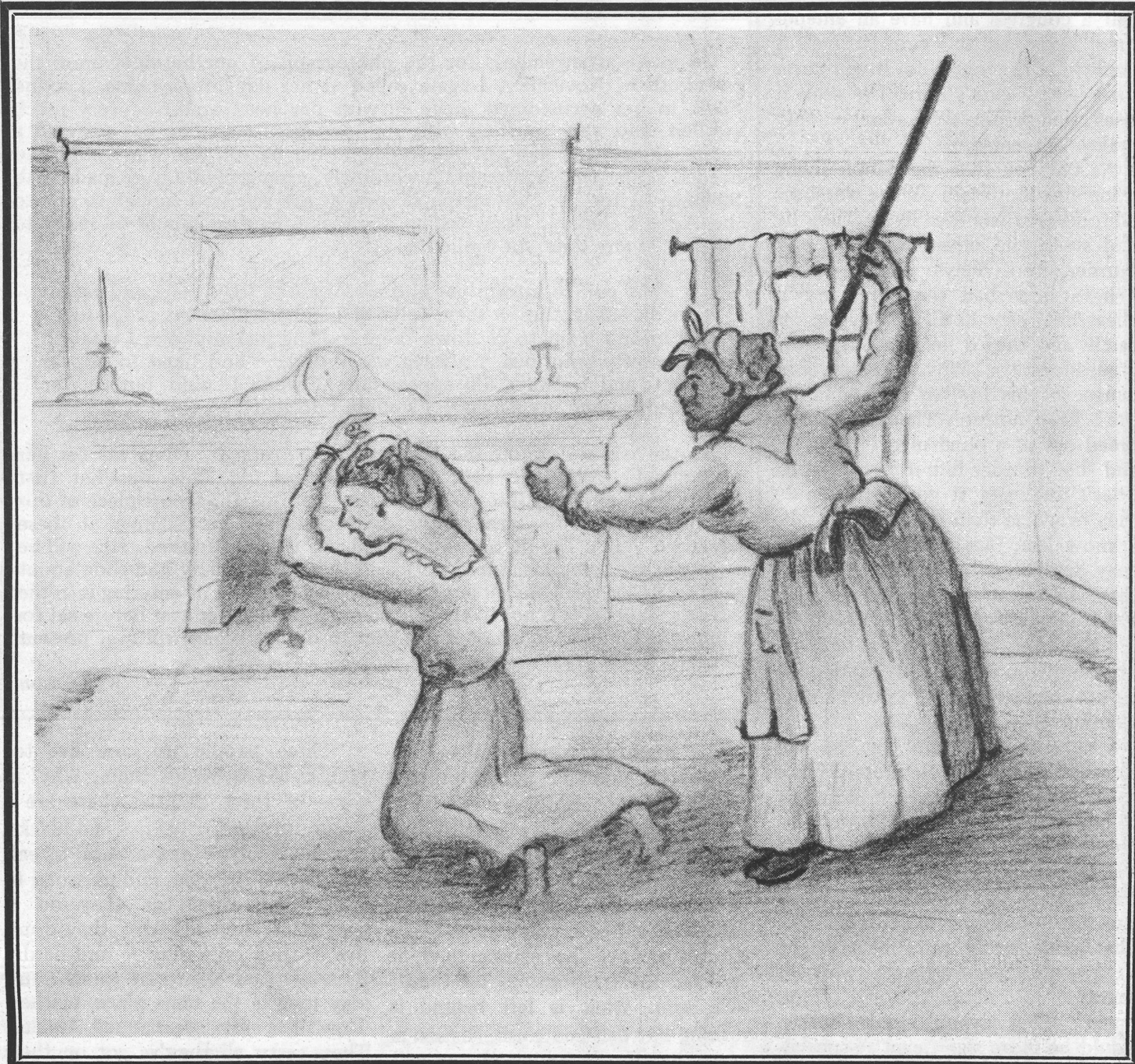
"Then I proceeded directly to Flagtown to see my mother. I did not find her there; she had moved to New Brunswick. On my way, a man called to me, asking me, 'Whose nigger are you?' I replied, 'I'm no man's nigger. I belong to God — I belong to no man.'

"He then said, 'Where are you going?' I replied, 'That's none of your business. I'm free — I go where I please.'

"He came toward me. I sat down my young one, showed him my fist, and looked at him, and I guess he saw 'twas no use. He mosied off, telling me that he would have me arrested as soon as he could find a magistrate.

"You see, in those days, the Negroes were all slaves, and they were sent nowhere, nor allowed to go anywhere without a pass; and when anyone met a Negro who was not with his master, he had a right to demand of him whose Negro he was. If the Negro did not show his pass, or did not give good evidence whose he was, he was arrested at once, and kept until his master came for him, paid whatever charges were made, and took him away. In those days, anyone had authority to arrest vagrant Negroes. They got pay for arresting them, and charged for their keeping until their master redeemed them. But he didn't arrest me — not a bit.

"When I got to New Brunswick, I found my mother. Soon after, I went to work, and remained in New Brunswick for several years. From New Brunswick I went to Princeton to work for Victor Tulane. I remained in his family a long while. I worked for him when Paul Tulane was a child; I worked there when he was born. Victor Tulane was a great man and a good man, and he used his servants well. And Paul was a nice



boy, and Madam Tulane was a good woman. I liked 'em all, and all the servants liked 'em."

* * * * *

"After a long while, I visited my grandfather, Harry Compton. He was then an old man; they say he was more than a hundred years old, and I guess he was, but he was quite active. He was short, but very stout, and very strong. He was considered the strongest man on the mountain, and they used to say that he was the strongest Negro that ever lived. He could put any man upon the ground — white or black.

"He wanted me to stay with him and take care of him, and I stayed. At his death, I inherited his property. I lived on the old homestead until a few years ago, when them damned democrats set fire to my house and burned up my home and all that I had. Since that time, I have lived at this place with my youngest daughter."

* * * * *

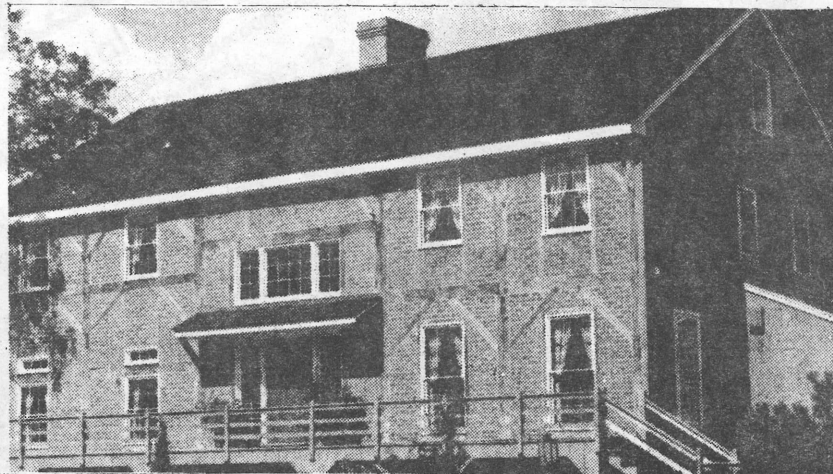
"I know every foot of this mountain — every hole and corner of it; every place where anybody lives, or ever has lived. And I know the folks, too, and some of 'em are pretty bad ones, too; in fact they are all bad, and some of them are worse. What the devil will ever do with them when he has to take 'em, I don't know. Surely he don't want 'em, and wouldn't have 'em if he could help it. The only reason that some of these folks up here don't die sooner than they do is, the devil won't have them. He just puts off takin' 'em, because he knows what a time he'll have when he gets 'em. Why! some of them are starved to death long

enough before they die, but they can't die — there's no place for them to go after they are dead. They ain't fit to go to heaven, and the devil won't have 'em, and so they have to stay here. Why, this mountain is worse than hell itself; why, if some of these folks don't behave better, after they go into the infernal regions the devils will have a time of it. He'll never manage 'em; he'll have to

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According to Silvia, Her Sourland Neighbors Were Rascals All

call a congress and have an amendment fixed to the constitution. A brimstone fire won't do. It will never faze 'em; it don't here. I've seen it tried, and it don't do at all — only makes 'em worse.

"I tell you that the people living upon this mountain are the worst set of folks that has ever lived. They lie and steal, and cheat, and rob, and murder, too. Why! you wouldn't believe how bad they are; they'd cheat the very devil, if he was on earth; and they'd lie him out of his possessions, too. Why, a person is in danger of his life up here, and he can't keep nothin'. They'd steal the bread out of a blind nigger's mouth, and then murder him if he told of it. That's the way it goes up here — they're worse than the devil himself. I know 'em; I've been to 'em — but they have never troubled me much — they know it wouldn't do. They know I'd give 'em a fight.

"Now this man that tried to sell my land from me, he's no gentleman. He's a damned rascal! I don't know whether the devil has sent for him yet or not; if he haint yet, he will some of these days. He pretends he's so damned good, but he'll never get to heaven. When he buried his father, he wanted to show his piety, and he had cut upon the monument that he placed upon his grave, a hand, with one finger pointing towards heaven. That looks pretty well, but he ought to have had a bottle of whiskey engraved just above the end of the finger. That would look better, would be more significant — specially to those of us who knew him. His father was not a bad man; but he did

To make arrangements for the photograph of our heroine, upon the twentieth of November, I again called at her daughter's home. I found Silvia in her accustomed niche — with her head and face very much swollen, and very muffled with rags and poultices. She has suffered a severe quinsy, and had not yet recovered her health. She was feeble, and needed supporting treatment. Accordingly, arrangements were made with Silvia to sit for her photograph as soon as she was well enough to ride to the Artist's Gallery. Upon telling her that a carriage would be ready to take her at any time, she replied:

I want you to inform me in time for me to fix myself, and get on some decent clothes — them folks at Lambertville are a proud lot — and I don't want to go down there looking just anyhow; I want to look pretty sniptious. I always was proud, — and liked to appear decent; and I always did appear decent when I could; but I never dressed beyond my means — I wouldn't do that!

At ten o'clock, upon the thirtieth of November, Silvia sat for her photograph. Although well nigh 116 years old, this was her first experience in looking into the artist's camera. But the frontispiece of this volume gives some idea of the gracefulness of her manner at these advanced years. The picture shows that she was a little tired. This will be expected by everyone, when informed that the old lady had rode about nine miles between the time of breakfasting and that of entering into the Artist's Gallery. It is not likely that so old a woman has ever before sat for a photograph; and it is not likely that so old a woman will ever present her face to the artist's camera.

C. W. Larison

like a dram of whiskey most desperate well; and he could take such a soaker, too.

Really, his father was a good man — was very good to the poor — and we all liked him. He was as much to be liked for his goodness, as his son is to be despised for his badness. The trouble is, when the old man died, he took all the goodness of the family with him. What is left behind is: nothing but damned trash. His son is worse than the devil himself, and will cheat anybody he can.

"These people up here live together; too many of them. Why! in some of them shanties there are a dozen or more, — whites and blacks, and all colors — and nothin' to eat, and nothin' to wear, and no wood to burn. And what can they do — they have to steal. Why, they don't live — they only stay — and hardly that; a good many of them don't stay long in the same place, neither. They're a set of damned turtles. They carry all they've got on their backs — and that ain't much, neither

Larison Daughter Sought Silvia's Haunts

Helen G. Legler here describes her experiences with Larison's daughter, Mary Blackwell, in searching for Silvia's home.

The daughter mentioned by Dr. Larison in his first recorded visit to Silvia was my friend, Mrs. Mame Larison Blackwell. Years ago, when I bought an old farm house near Reaville, I was referred to her for information. It was the homestead of a family related to her mother's people, so I got a great deal of her own family's history as well.

In those days my mother was living with me, and it was our pleasure to drive along the old roads to get acquainted with our new environment. We often stopped to ask Mrs. Blackwell to join us, and she was always willing — and ready, after removing her apron and putting on a little jeweled pin.

Many were the stories she'd told us about "Old Sil," and she asked if we could go to the mountain to see if she could find the site of her cabin. We passed a rock which she called "Knitting Betty," and stopped where she thought we might be close to the spot she remembered. I thought, of course, that the ruins would be at the edge of the road, but not at all! She plunged into the woods, with me close behind her, and behind rocks, through briars, over fallen tree trunks, we were soon out of sight of the road and the car — and my very worried mother. I was even more worried, having heard that the mountain was alive with copperheads.

Mrs. Blackwell, in her late 'seventies, wore full long skirts, which she necessarily looped over her arm as we plodded on, exposing her ankles to whatever fangs lay in wait. I doubt that my blue jeans would have been much protection to mine.

Our search was inconclusive. She felt we were near the spot, possibly even on it, but there were no identifiable scraps among the general woodland litter. We also failed to see any copperheads, and if they saw us, they were probably as afraid of us as I was afraid of them.

Helen Legler
Jamesburg, N.J.

— and then they're ready to get up and get out any time; and you catch 'em if you want to.

"And there's no distinction of color up here, not a bit. The niggers and whites all live together. The whites are just as good as the niggers, and both are as bad as the devil can make 'em. The Negroes marry the whites when they want to; but they don't do much marryin' up here — they don't have to — and then it's no use — it's too much trouble. And children, there's a plenty of 'em, and all colors — black, and white, and yellow — and any other color that you have ever seen, but blue: there ain't no blue ones yet. How do they bring 'em up? They don't bring 'em up. Why, as soon as they are born, every devil of 'em is for himself, and the devil's for 'em all. That's how that goes. And I tell you they have a blamed hard time of it, too.

"They name 'em after their daddys, to be sure — if they know who they are. But that don't make any odds, 'cause before they are grown up, half of 'em don't know their own younguns from anybody else's, and the other half of 'em wouldn't own 'em if they did. And the young ones ain't no better — they often swear they had no daddys. You see, just as soon as they get big enough, they travel out to get something to eat, and if the food is pretty good, maybe they'll stay — never get back. And if they come back, they find so many more in the nest, they can't stay if they want to. Why, none of 'em that's good for anything ever stays here. They go away when they are small, and get work and stay. You'll find folks born on this mountain, livin' in Princeton, New Brunswick, in Trenton, in New York, and the devil knows where all, and if they are drivin' team for some big-bugs, or are waiters in some great hotel, they'll never own they were born on this mountain, not a bit of it. They know better. But, if one turns out to be a poor devil, and gets into some bad scrape — that fellow is sure to come back to the mountain. That's the way they keep the ranks full — full of the scoundrels that can't stay anywhere else; that's the way it goes with the folks here.

"I tell the truth, and I could tell more of it; why, you don't know 'em. There is more folks killed up here than anybody knows of. And you know somebody is killed up here every year; and nobody is ever hanged for it. And it gets worse and worse. If they kill anybody up here, they just take the murderers off to Flemington and keep 'em in jail awhile 'til they have a trial, and then they turn 'em out to come back here, and then they are worse than they were before. They just kill anybody then.

"And they steal! Why, you wouldn't believe how much they steal. They don't steal much of one another, because that wouldn't do; if they were caught at that they'd get killed damned soon, and then they ain't got much to be stold. But they go off from the mountain down into the valleys, and there they steal anything they can find — sheep and chickens, and grain, and meat, and

BRIDGE AUTO BODY

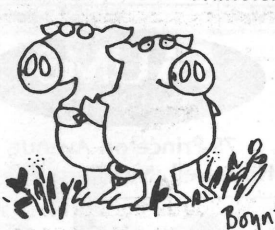


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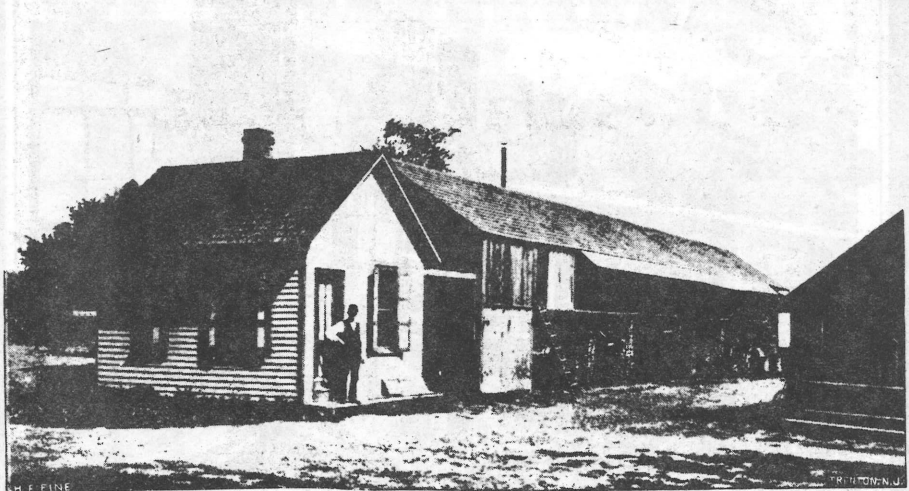
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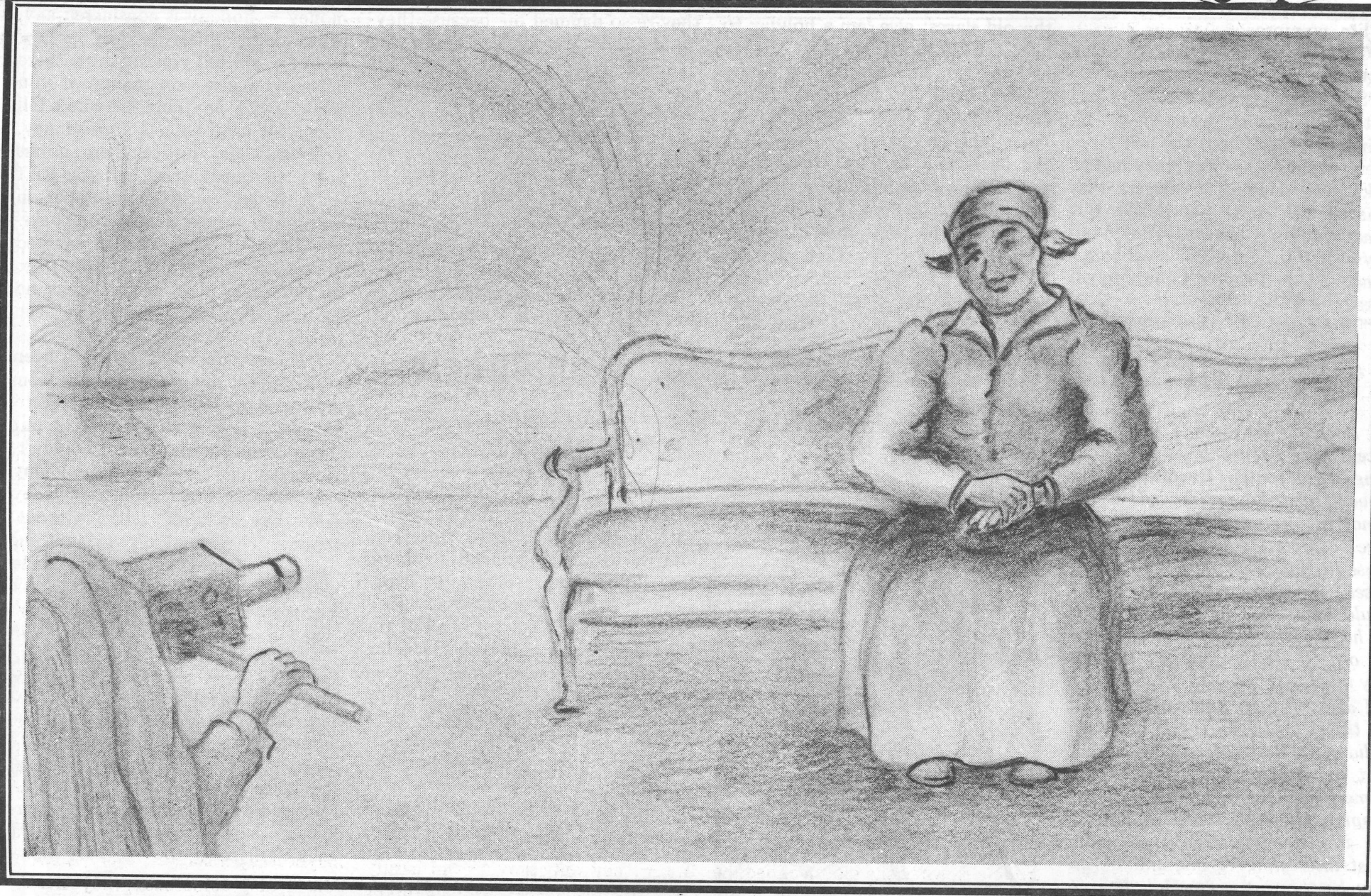


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Looking Sniptious. Silvia Posed for Lambertville Photographer



clothes — and anything else that they can eat or wear, and nobody can find anything that has been stolen by the folks up here, for, when anything is to be stolen, they all know about it, and they all lie for each other, and they all know where it is to be hid, and they all help to keep folks from finding it. So it does no good to hunt up here for stolen goods. And then they know so damned well how to hide things, too; they don't hide what they steal in their house, until all the houses have been searched. When they steal anything, then they hide it in some hole that nobody but mountaineers know of, or else under some rocks, or under some wood, where nobody but the mountaineers would think of looking. That is the way they do business up here, and if you tell 'em of it, they'll kill you — damned if they won't.

"Why, some of 'em ought to be hanged right up by the neck, and some of 'em ought to be tied up and licked nearly to death — tied right up to a post and licked 'til within an inch of the life. That's what ought to be done with 'em — that's the way I'd serve 'em. I'd take 'em up to Flemington, and lick 'em 'til they'd never want to be licked again.

"I used to go to Flemington whenever there was any doings there, whenever there was general training, and whenever the big men had their meetings there. General training was the biggest day for the niggers — I tell you, that was the biggest day. The niggers were all out to general training — little and big, old and young. And then they'd have some rum — always had rum at general training — and then you'd hear 'em laugh a mile. And when they got into a fight, you'd hear 'em yell more than five miles. The cowards did; it was worse than anything you ever heard. Worse than anything but a cowardly nigger.

"Why, of course, them that was

whipped, they'd get some whiskey, and then they'd get into a *kintacoy* and make a noise, perhaps. They'd get into a row or fight, and then somebody would get hurt. And then the one that got hurt would complain to the authorities, and then the constables would be after the niggers. And when they caught 'em, they'd tie 'em right up without judge or jury, and pull off the shirt, and put it right on the bare hide. My God, how they'd lick 'em — cut the hide all in gashes.

"I've seen 'em whip niggers, yes, I have! Seen 'em lick a dozen of 'em at a time. Tie 'em right up to a post and give 'em hell, right on the bare back: fetch the blood every time. And they'd holler. Good God! They'd howl 'til you could hear 'em a mile; and then, when they had cut the back all in slits, they'd put salt in the gashes, and then they'd howl! Lord God! No panther in the Beech Woods ever made half so much noise.

"I was at Flemington when the little nigger was hanged for murdering his mistress. That was the damndest time I ever saw. The niggers quarreled and fought and pounded each other, and bit each others' ears off, and then pounded each others' noses down, bunged each others' eyes, and some blame near got killed. And then them damned Flemingtoners got after 'em, and they tied 'em up and licked 'em without mercy. Cut 'em all up in strings — just left

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JULIUS LENGVEL

Studio Portrait of Silvia Sought in Vain

Efforts to rediscover the likeness of Silvia Dubois taken by a Lambertville photographer brought this response.

Your request for information on the photograph of Silvia Dubois comes at a time when we are researching material for the Eastman Kodak Museum. All I can tell you is that in 1883 there was a photographer in Lambertville named Frank Z. Frity. He is the only one fitting your date. He died in 1897 and the business was sold to Robert Park.

Eastman has samples of his work and has asked for biographical material, some of which we can supply. We have no samples of his work, but the Hunterdon County Democrat in Flemington has given us publicity and asked that any information be sent to us.

We have three others on their list about whom we have found nothing.

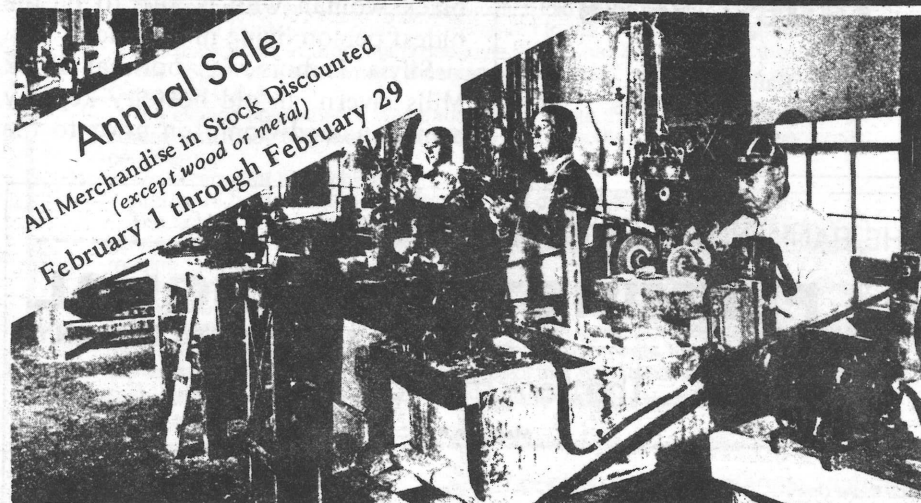
The names are H. C. Aller, W. H. Davison and Bro., and J. R. Ellenger. It is possible that one or more of them was a contemporary of Frity, but so far we know nothing of them or their work.

Henrietta Van Syckle
Corresponding Secretary
Lambertville Historical Society
Lambertville, New Jersey

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Public Slave Floggings in Flemington Witnessed by Silvia

the life, no more.

"That was a great time. I'll never forget that.

"Sometimes (most always, I expect) the niggers deserved to be whipped. They had to lick 'em. There was no other way; they had to make 'em mind. The niggers that behaved well never got licked. But some wouldn't behave. They'd always get into a row, or steal something, and then they'd be sure to get licked.

"That's the way they used to fix

the old slaves: give 'em a holiday to have a little sport, and then, if they had any fun, lick 'em 'til they'd have a sore back 'til the next holiday come. Then when the next one come, the niggers always wanted to go, back sore or well. Never knew one to miss when his master told him he could go.

"That's the way they fixed the niggers in old times, them damned Flemingtoners. They think they are so damned big. I felt like kicking their damned tripes out. They think

they're so damned big because they're dressed up a little. They're too damned proud to be decent. If they'd come over on the mountain, we'd show 'em! We'd skin every devil of 'em — I'd like to do it myself, old as I am. I'd just like to put my fist against their eyes.

"Have I been to that damned Flemington? Yes, I've been there, and it is the damndest place in the world.

"I've got enough against it. You can't get anything there without

money — nobody is considered anything there unless he has money. Nobody will tell you anything there unless you give 'em money; if you ask a lawyer anything, he won't tell you a bit until he gets your money. You can't get justice there unless you have some money, and you can't get it then, because if another person has more money than you have, they'll all of 'em — every damned lawyer, the judge, and the jury — go for him, and a poor body has no show at all. I know 'em — I've been to 'em. They're a bad set.

"Those damned S---s have been trying to get my property away from me for many years, and I wanted to consult a lawyer to get him to put these devils through, but I couldn't. Not a damned lawyer would take my case, because I had no money. They said they couldn't talk without money. They couldn't do anything for me unless I paid them some money. Pay 'em! I couldn't. I hadn't a cent to my name "

Hopewell Historian Offers 1889 Clipping on Dubois

I know it has been a long time since I have been able to send anything to you for The Recollector. My husband and I have moved into a wonderful retirement village. We were both getting very unwell in the house in Hopewell, and we were glad to sell. The move was traumatic as it would be for anyone our ages, but we had willing helpers and survived the ordeal. We love our new cottage very much.

I am still busy down here sorting out things for the Hopewell Museum. I did so much research in the past that the accumulation of papers is tremendous. I am sending you one clipping that you might be able to use in The Recollector. It seems most interesting to me, and I trust may be thought worthwhile in your publication. I found the article in an old history book in my possession. There is no name given for the newspaper in which it was originally published, as the clipping was close cut to the article. It is hand-dated 1889.

I am glad to know the History Project is still going. We enjoy The Recollector so much. If you are ever

down this way in Burlington County, be sure to look us up.

Alice Blackwell Lewis
Vincentown, New Jersey



Alice B. Lewis drew the likeness of Silvia from a cut included with the article printed below.

Revolution. Her parents were slaves owned by the proprietor of the tavern. Her life was spent among the mountains South of Neshanic. When fifteen years old her master moved to New Brunswick and a short time afterwards went to Great Bend on the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania. While there Silvia purchased her freedom and started on foot for Princeton, N.J., at which place she arrived after a very tiresome and long journey. She fell heir to the little property in the Sourland Mountains at the death of her father, who years before had paid for his freedom and by hard toil had accumulated sufficient money to pay for a little land and house. Silvia returned there to live, and there, in company with her daughter Elizabeth, who is eighty-nine years old, had lived over eighty years.

Two years ago Dr. Cornelius W. Larison, of Ringoes, a local historian of considerable talent and reputation, wrote and published a book of Silvia's life. The little volume contains many interesting incidents and episodes which she had experienced in her long life.

There is no question as to the accuracy of this old woman's age. She was born March 5, 1768. Her old master, Mr. Compton, had a son Richard, who was born the same year Silvia was, and with whom Silvia remembers distinctly playing when a child. This son's age is recorded in an old Bible in the possession of a family named Gomo, living at Rock Mills.

Silvia Dubois, although unable to read or write, has a remarkable memory. She can call to mind almost every important event that she has experienced or heard related in her lifetime, and by a little persuasion can be induced to talk freely concerning events that have taken place in Hunterdon County during the past seventy-five years. Her daughter, who lives with her and contributes largely to her support, although eighty-nine years old, looks scarcely more than sixty, and bids fair to reach the great age of her maternal ancestor. The house they live in is built of logs and contains only one room, with a small garret overhead. This remarkable old woman has excited a great amount of interest among the people of Central New Jersey, and every Summer the people of Central New Jersey and other tourists wend their way to the lonely little cabin on the top of Sourland Mountain to see her.

THE OLDEST WOMAN IN AMERICA

Her age is 119 years and she lives with a daughter 89 years old.

On a broad plateau at the highest point of the Sourland Mountains, twelve miles from Flemington, Hunterdon County, overlooking the fertile fields and thriving towns and villages and villages for miles around, where the sightseer can trace with unobstructed view the winding silvery trail of the Raritan River from its source eastward to the sea, lives a black woman who is said to be the oldest person living in America.

Silvia Dubois was born at Rock Mills tavern, an old hostelry kept by a man named Compton prior to the



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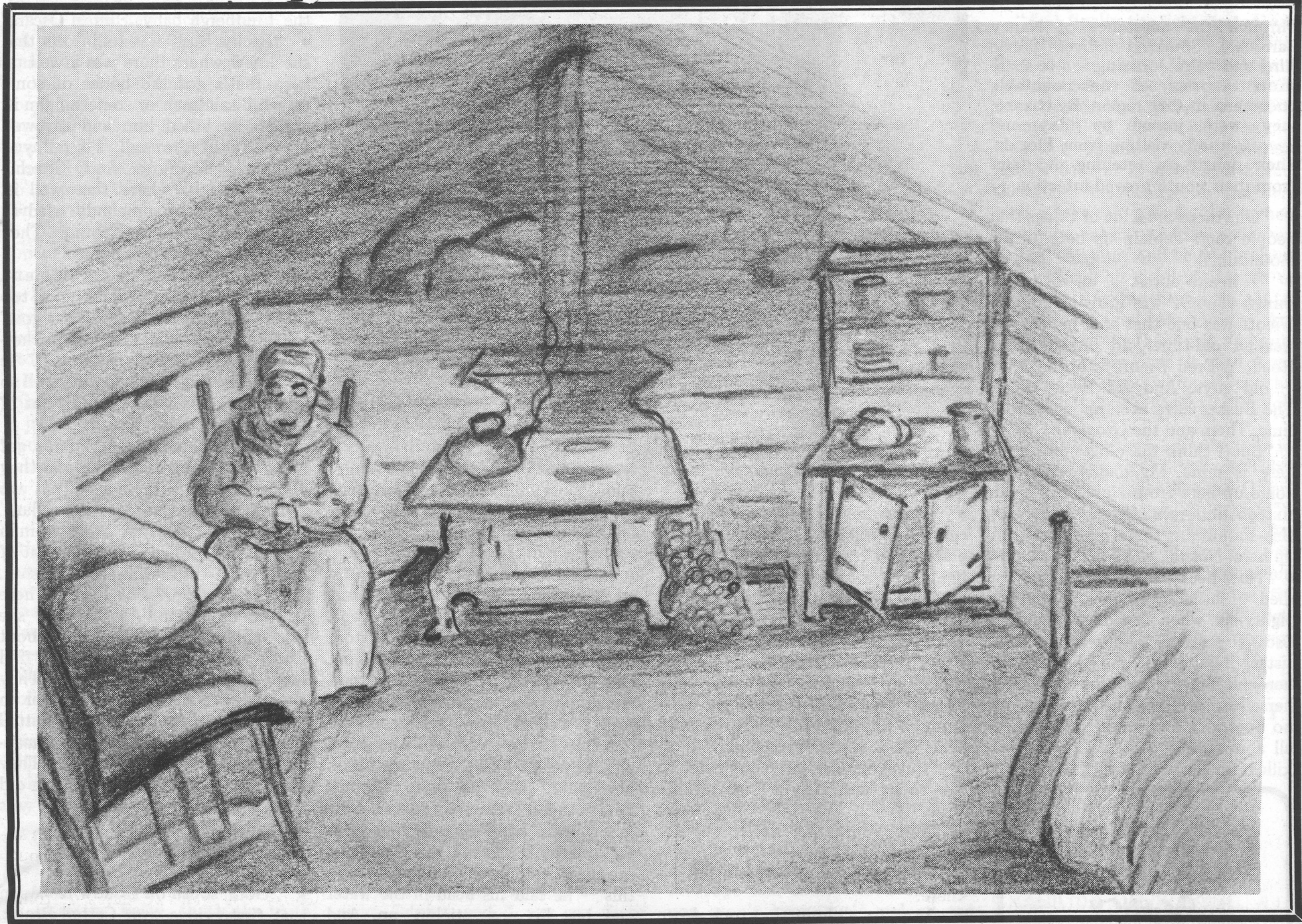
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Silvia Was Reported to Have Succumbed During Blizzard of '88



white trash from all over came and filled the house, and the space around the house, and behaved so badly, and made so much noise out of doors, that we couldn't have meeting anymore. And now I don't hear preaching anymore, but I'd like to."

* * * * *

"Sometimes I suffer colds. 'Taint no use to be sick. Folks don't feel well when they'm sick; they feel best when they'm well. They wouldn't be half so sick if they'd behave 'em-selves, and stay at home, and eat plain vittles. They want to run all over, and be into all kinds of nigger shines and stuff 'em-selves with all kinds of things, and their guts won't stand it. Then they get sick, and like enough send for a doctor. And when he comes, if they're not pretty careful, they'll have a hell of a time, for he is sure to go right for the guts, fust pass. Never knew one of 'em to miss. A big dose of calomel and jalap to begin business, and then the war is begun. These doctors, they've got no mercy on you, 'specially if you're black. Ah, I've seen 'em many a time, but they never come after me. I never gave 'em a chance, not the first time.

"I didn't used to get quinsy, nor any other kind of sore throat. But now I'm old, and my teeth are out, and the wind blows right down my throat, and I take cold. Why, sometimes it blows clear down to my stomach, and further, too. Why, it blows clear through me. When I had teeth, it didn't used to do so.

"I'm pretty near dead now, and God knows I ought to have been dead long ago. None of us have a lease of life. I know I am old, and according to the way it has been

with everybody else, I see I must die. I may die very suddenly, when none are expecting it — such old folks sometimes die very suddenly. But there's no telling about that.

"I ain't tired of life; I'd like to live another hundred years yet — and I don't know but I will, too. My teeth are good, and if I can get enough to eat, I don't know why I should die; there's no use in dying. You ain't good for anything after you're dead."

Postscript.....

Hunterdon County historian Norman Wittwer has provided a postscript to the story of Silvia Dubois, in the form of two clippings from the pages of the prestigious *Hunterdon County Democrat*, which were published shortly after the blizzard of '88.

March 27, 1888

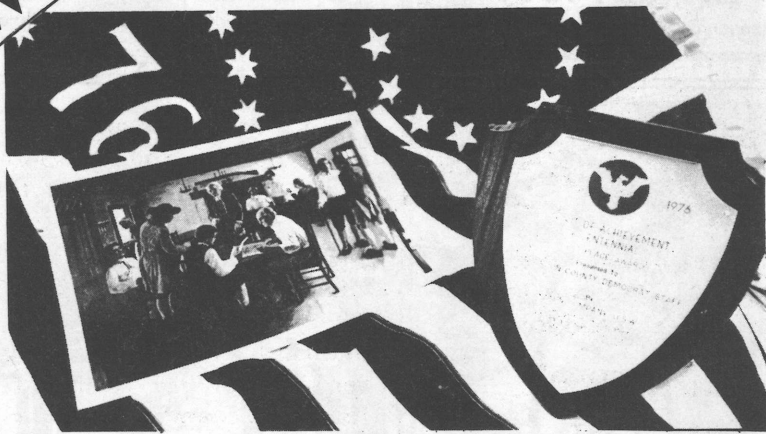
"Silvia Dubois, the famous old Negrass of the Sourland Mountain, died in her cabin from the effects of the late blizzard. Her age was authenticated to be 122 years, and she was the oldest person in the State when she died."

April 10, 1888

"The report that old Silvia Dubois had died during blizzard week at her home on Sourland Mountain, is denied by the old woman herself. When such testimony as this is offered, it must be accepted. We don't know who started the false report. May Silvia live on until she dies."

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Headless Spectre, Knitting Betty, Still Haunts Sourlands

before, never felt such a warm. . . it felt like something was tight 'n squeezin' me."

• "Me and Frankie Bush was comin' up here one night and we got down just above Perks' where that lane goes up over the hill. . . Servie [Servis] Lane. So Frank says, 'Let's go up over there.' We were lookin' for anything we could find — rabbit — 'possum. So we got up there on top of the hill. And here was a man stood in the middle of the road, and he had one of those scythes you cut hay with, you know. And Frank says, 'Hold it, hold it.' And I stopped and I stood there a couple of minutes and all of a sudden, that thing disappeared. It didn't walk off, it just. . . He had one of those scythes you cut grass with and he stood there in the middle of the road."

• "Knittin' Betty sets up on the other side of the mountain. John Jones and I went up there, and I never felt such a strange feeling. They laugh at me, but John Jones was there with me. He says, 'Did you ever hear of Knittin' Betty?' I says, 'No. I never heard of Knittin' Betty, John.' He says, 'I'm gonna show you something.' An' John Jones and I went up there and set. An' he says, 'Just wait here 'n keep real quiet.' I got the *strangest* feelin' I ever had in my life. Chills. Chills run through me."

"I saw her in the evening. I've seen her at night, too, in front of headlights."

• "Knittin' Betty, that's the truth. I've seen her several times. Oh yeah. Sits on a rock up here yonder — always sits on the same rock."

• "She was sitting on a rock. And then she got up and moved and walked toward the deeper part of the woods."

• "When I saw her she had a kind of lace gown on."

• "To me, when I seen here, she had this old. . . it was like spider webs."

• "That's it. It was like a lace gown."

• "I don't know how she kept it on herself. But all I seen was her shoulders and the frame of her body. And no head. Knittin' Betty."

• "Only time I ever seen her, she had no head."

• "Headless."

• "No head at all."

• "No head. She had her head cut off once. She had her head shot off



Courtesy of Centennial Savings

or something."

• "They say she was knittin' something at the time."

• "She's always knittin'."

• "I could show you where that is, but I don't like to go anywheres near it. When I gets there I get chills from it. I don't want to see no parts of it."

• "During Prohibition days there were stills all over up here. I remember John Markie had whiskey buried in the yard, and nobody knew where it was. And one day we had a light skiff of snow. I went by there and I looked. And wherever there was a keg of whiskey it wasn't frozen. And I said, John, come here! Oh, brother, he just about died right then."

• "He never liked fighting, but one night Garrett and I was up there drinkin' his whiskey with him, and Garrett said he was going to whop me, and I said he couldn't do it. And finally Garrett swung at me and I ducked; and I swang at Garrett and I missed him, but I hit John Markie and knocked him cold. And while he was cold we drunk all his whiskey and left."

• "When John was runnin' the still and sellin' whiskey, he never kept any money in the house. You'd go in there and buy a bottle of beer off of him, and he'd go outside and come back with change."

• "Yeah, he kept it way in the back in a hole in the ground under a big rock. Let me tell you something. After he died — I won't tell you who found it — you know how much money he found in it? Eleven thousand dollars!"

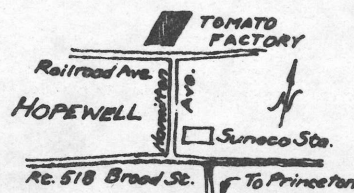
• "Years and years and years ago they used to have a Harvest Home up

here. And they used to have like a carnival and a picnic and a big dance. Everybody was invited. And we got in there. I was only a little bitty baby then. Mama was there, and Daddy got in there. And these guys from Hopewell thought they was smart, you know. And we just took over the damn party that way. Daddy walked up, and they had a rope around the dance floor, and he said, 'What've you got a rope around the dancin' for?' Jim was a young man then, and Ferd and John and George and all of them was young scrappin' boys then. And Daddy said, 'What've you got that rope for? And this smart Hopewell guy — I think his name was Morris, or something like that — said, 'That's to keep the cows out!' And Daddy jumped over top of the rope and said, 'Here's one bull you won't keep out!' and started jiggin'.

"And finally the fight started, and they run those Hopewell boys into the outside privy that way, and pushed it into the brook with the door down, see. And they tried to drown all of those guys out of Hopewell. Anyhow, they kicked the boards off of it and came out of there and hit George in the head with a crowbar. And he laid up here on the mountain. And the police was lookin' for him. And he laid up here, and he had his head all busted up that way. And damned, it got all festered up and everything. And Daddy went up there and put some kinds of weeds onto it, and it got better. But they whipped up that Hopewell gang, I want to tell you, now."

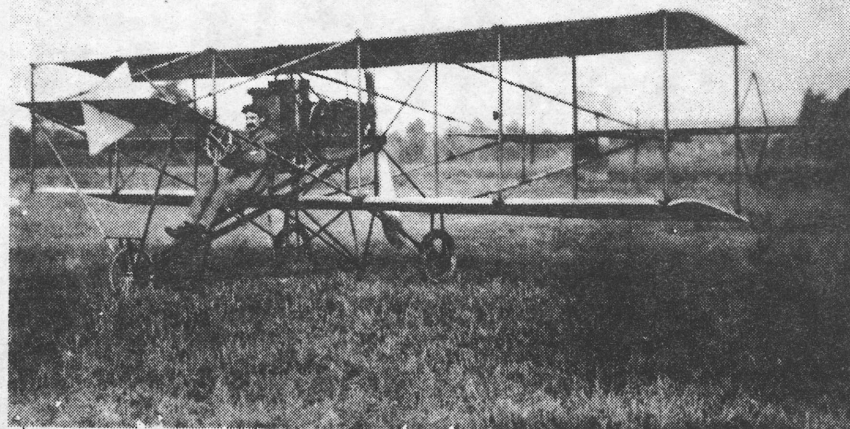
• "And then there was the time we flew over the top of that old lady's house down yonder beyond Oscar's house. And I was goin' to drop a five pound bag of flour on her roof, just to see the flour explode. We were flyin' in an airplane, you know, and damned, I didn't know what five pounds would do. It went right through the roof! Those were crazy days!"

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In 1911, aviation pioneer Richard Newhouse designed and built the airplane in which he is shown at Bolmer's Field in Rocky Hill.

Photo Courtesy of The Historical Society of Princeton

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Rare Photograph Reveals Silvia Dubois and Daughter Lizzie



The words Cornelius W. Larison chose to define his attitude toward history nearly a century ago might as well serve as a motto for *The Recollector* today:

About twenty-one years ago, the practice of medicine brought me into acquaintance with many of the most aged people living in the southern part of Hunterdon and Somerset Counties, and the northern part of Mercer. Since that time it has been my fortune to maintain an acquaintance with nearly all the old folks for many miles around. As I have always had an ear for history, and especially a deep interest in all that relates to the history of my native county, and of the people who dwell here, I have ever listened to, and often made notes of, the stories that the aged have told me. Hence, I have slowly accumulated a store of facts such as every lover of history cannot well forget — even if he wanted to.

Of these facts, some relate to the fairest phases of life — to heroic patriotism, to high-sold philanthropy, to untiring devotion to the Christian cause, to filial affection and the like, some to the darkest, dreariest phases of human life — to scenes

of revelry, acts of debauchery, to squalid poverty, to abject degeneracy, and to heinous crimes. But facts are facts; and it has taken each and all of these things and thousands that are yet untold to form the lives of the citizens of our area — the doings of the people among whom we live; and no history of our region can be complete, nor of much value as a record of the lives of a people that does not chronicle, at the same time, the doings of the great and the small, the rich and the poor, the proud and the humble, the exalted and the abject, the virtuous and the vicious, the frugal and the squalid.

Too often what is called history is but the record of the fairest facts of a single famous individual, or of a favored few, which look well upon paper and are pleasing to the ear, but which only represent the scintillations of society, or of some favored individual, entirely ignoring the doings of the masses, and shunning with

disdain, the deeds, the patience and the sufferings of the poor. Too often we forget that it takes the peasant as well as the priest and the president, to make society, to form the constituency of a state. Too often we forget that the degenerate and the abject are indispensable parts to society, that they have rights and privileges, and that they are but the counterparts of the best of the citizens of a commonwealth.

On this occasion it is my business to record the acts and sayings of one who has not been illustrious for philanthropic deeds. But, a study of this record — of these acts and sayings — is worthy, and will well repay anyone who wishes to know the results of a life of dissoluteness; who wishes to see what unbridled passions lead to; who wishes to know how abject and squalid a person can be, and yet live not far from the fairest phases of civilized life.